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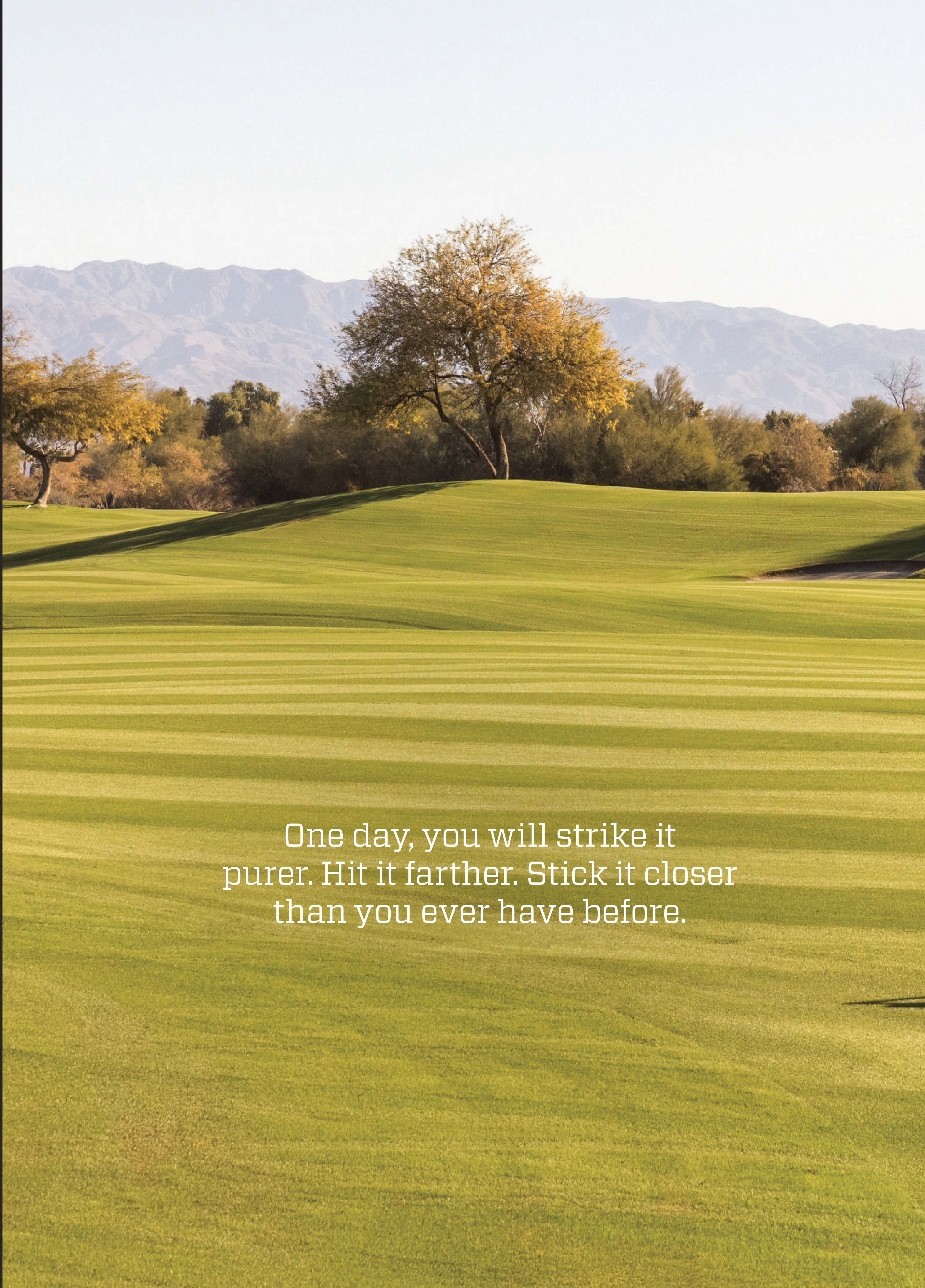

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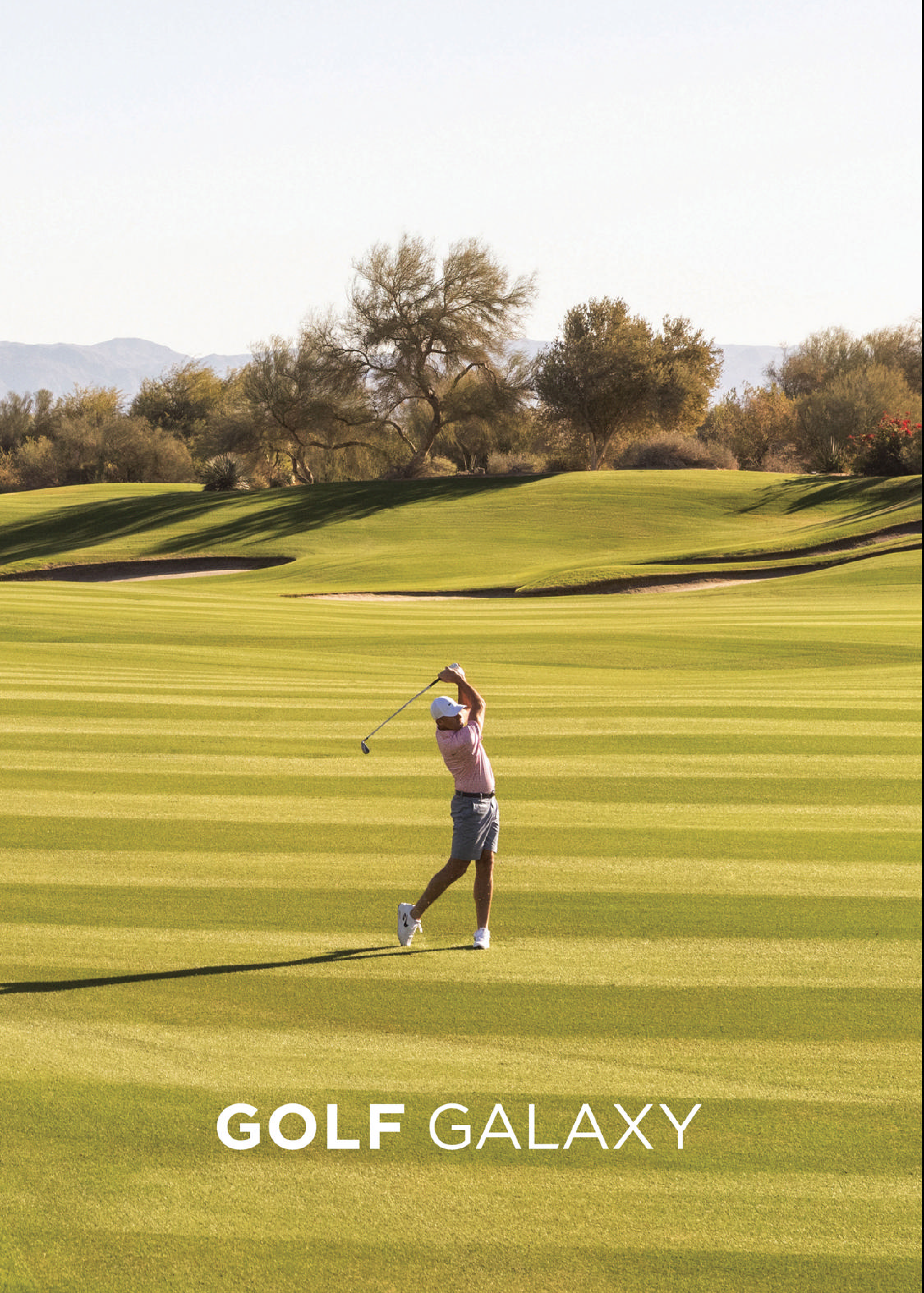
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EDITOR'S LETTER

Pro or Amateur?

Seeing the line has always been tricky

By Max Adler

CASHING IN World No. 1 amateur Rose Zhang of Stanford is paid by Callaway and Adidas.

JARED C. TILTON/GETTY IMAGES

WORD ON THE STREET is that the current price for a top college recruit is $50,000. The source could be a major clothing or equipment brand but more likely is a collective of boosters with pride in its alma mater and connections to various businesses. Depending which coach you ask, the situation has created a Wild West in which school prestige and practice facilities matter less. For the amateur inking an NIL (name, image, likeness) endorsement deal, the expenses of a summer's travel to tournaments could be covered, with plenty left over for books, beer and walking around.

Ironically, I recently heard the same figure—$50,000—in a story about Bobby Jones told to me by Sid Matthew, the preeminent historian on the game's greatest amateur. It's precisely how much was in an envelope at a dinner in 1927 when the city of Atlanta ceremoniously thanked this "man who has carried Atlanta's banner to the very corners of the earth and returned with banner unfurled in victory." The intent was to enable the young golfing lawyer and his wife to buy their first home, and Jones' acceptance remarks were gracious if not emotional.

Three weeks later he gave it back. Although the USGA was cool with it (this was an era where watches, rings and cars mixed among gilded trophies, after all), the stricter Royal and Ancient hinted Jones would be disinvited from the British Amateur. To continue his dream of the Grand Slam—which he would famously achieve in 1930—Jones felt no choice.

Lately all we talk about is golfers and their financial choices. Given the inevitably awkward Champions Dinner with or without LIV players at this year's Masters, a few college kids wearing commercial logos on the grounds of Augusta National pales in edginess. Still, with money turbulently gushing into golf, reexamining what the term "amateur" means is more pressing than usual.

No word's definition has changed more in the past 160 years. Its first usage was to keep "pro" caddies out of competitions for noblemen and dock workers out of crew races. Whatever the sport, if you needed the possibility of pay to justify taking a day off work, you found your own game in class-obsessed Britain. A college scholarship used to be a flagrant violation of amateur code, until it wasn't. You'd be bored if we listed all the changes across time but consider that the USGA and R&A arrived at a joint set of rules for how to play the game in 1952 but couldn't agree on a set for amateur status until 2012. This NIL wrinkle was new in 2022, but the 2020 loosening around equipment, travel expenses and prizes was as significant.

Few appreciate the difficulty of perpetually modernizing this word better than Craig Winter, senior director of rules and amateur status at the USGA. He has even led discussions about abolishing it, investigating if golf should adopt an "open" model like tennis, where age groups are the main separator.

"Tradition and history are strong elements in golf, and we feel our amateur championships are worth preserving," Winters says. More relevant to 25 million weekend golfers, "Removing limits around cash prizes could overwhelm our system of handicapping, equipment and rules, which all work together." Read: Take away amateur status rules, and we risk low-net club tournaments, the lifeblood of our participatory game, becoming overrun by swindlers great and small. Because of golf's unique culture, separating those who play for the love of the game versus those who play for something else is essential. But in a fast-changing society where even children get paid as influencers on social media, it's not easy.

If there's one basic idea to understand in this new world, it's that it's OK to seek financial support. The governing bodies don't want money to be an obstacle or tripwire for young golfers trying to advance to the next level.

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Max

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TEE SHEET

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PARADISE FOUND The hidden 17th tee at Cabot Saint Lucia's Point Hardy Golf Club, scheduled to open in December.

BRIAN OAR

COVER PHOTOGRAPH BY DAN WINTERS

4 Editor's Letter
Sorting pros and amateurs keeps getting trickier.
BY MAX ADLER

Mind

12 Undercover Caddie
Enduring a collapse at the Masters is something you never get over.
WITH JOEL BEALL

14 Journeys
The LPGA's Lucy Li
WITH KEELY LEVINS

18 Golf and Chill
A CBD experiment at The Villages.
BY MATTHEW RUDY

20 Golf in the Forecast
The 'Today' show's Dylan Dreyer is crazy about the game.
BY ALEX MYERS

24 The Best Two Weeks in Sports
My all-time favorite back-to-back Final Four and Masters thrillers.
BY JIM NANTZ

28 A Game That Punches Above Its Weight
How to fix what's ailing pro golf.
BY JERRY TARDE

Body

113 Dial in Your Ball-Striking
Try my three backswing keys for reliable results.
BY JENNIFER KUPCHO

116 Swing Sequence
Tony Finau's key move.
WITH DAVE ALLEN

118 What's in My Bag
World No. 1 Lydia Ko
WITH KEELY LEVINS

121 Golf Digest Schools
Simplify your chipping.
BY SEAN HOGAN

124 The Loop
What kind of Masters viewer are you?
BY COLEMAN BENTLEY

Features

32 Fully Present
Practical lessons on focus, patience, nerves and intent.
BY SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER

42 Growing Pressure
The home of the Masters contends with LIV, distance, property expansion and its own impossible standards.
BY JOEL BEALL

52 For Rent
Finding homes in Augusta is the other big game during Masters week.
BY CHRISTOPHER POWERS

60 This Is Awkward
What you can learn from how the pros play these shots at Augusta.
BY DAVID LEADBETTER

70 Mad Money
Our ranking of the game's 50 highest earners.
BY MATTHEW RUDY

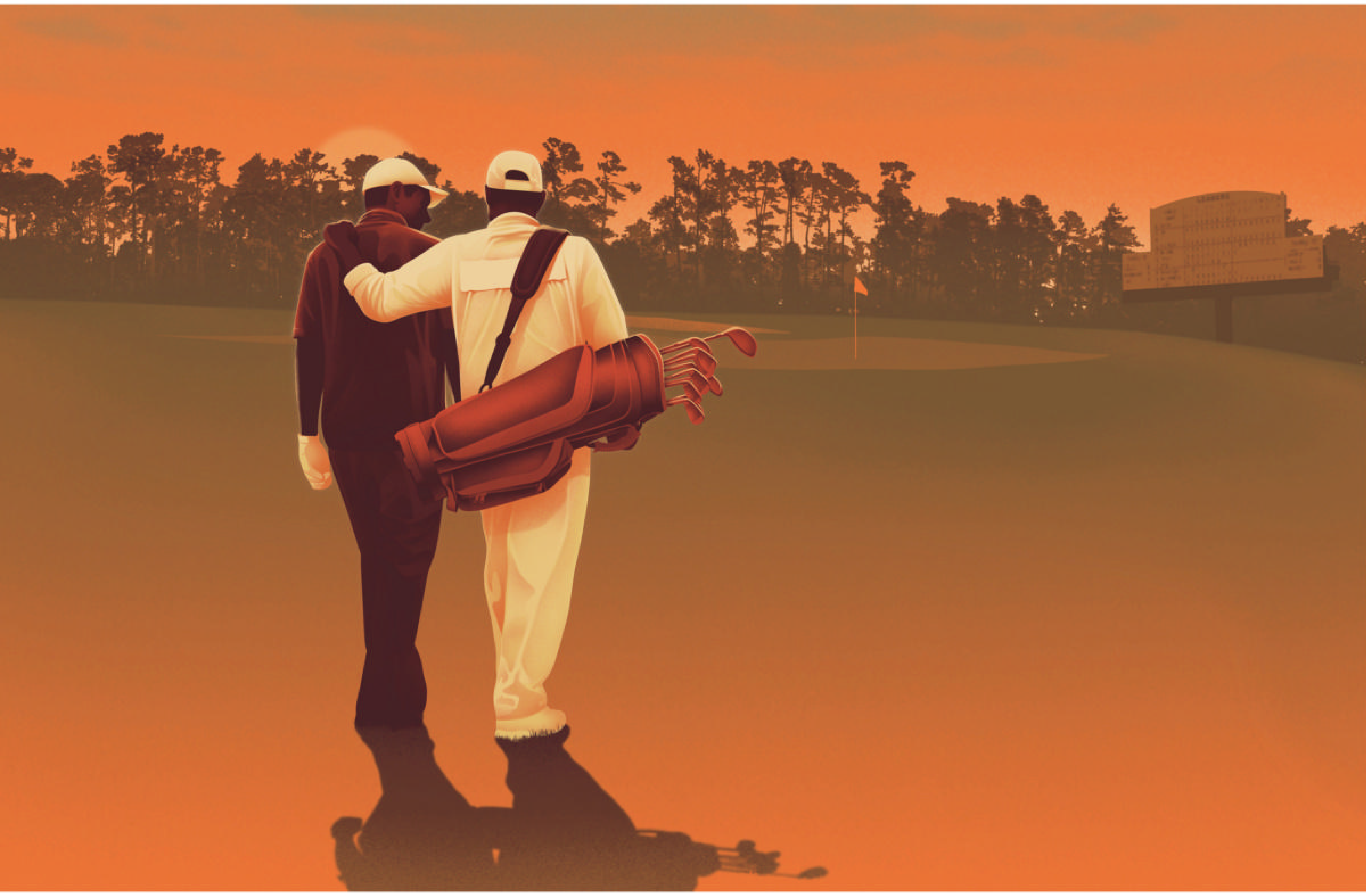
80 Cliffhanger
With nine holes along the ocean, will Cabot Saint Lucia live up to the hype?
BY DEREK DUNCAN

96 Start Your Engines
Tune the body parts that drive each shot type.
BY ERIKA LARKIN

108 Stable Geniuses
Eight shoes to keep you grounded.
BY KEELY LEVINS

Undercover Caddie

Enduring a collapse at the Masters is something you never get over



WE UNDERSTOOD THE FINALITY. My player had been a professional for some time, and although he and his game had aged well, he knew there wasn't much time left to compete. He knew he didn't have much of a track record at Augusta National. Yet that year, on that week, he went low. We didn't have the lead, but we had a real shot. At this stage of his career, it was likely going to be the only one we would get.

It's no secret that some pros don't love the game the way fans do. You can get jaded by the business, the travel, the defeats and the reality that you're not as good as you think. That wasn't my player. He loved everything about golf, especially the Masters. He knew its history and how lucky he was to play in it. One year he missed the cut and decided to stay for the weekend and watch it as a fan, which isn't something you often see. I think that's what hurt his performance over the years; he wanted it too much and played outside himself.

However, one year everything clicked. Friday was flawless; in tough conditions, he had total control over his game. Saturday was another good day, and when we departed that evening, I believed he was mentally ready for the final 18. My adrenaline was flowing, too; I had to remind myself to eat dinner around 10 p.m. My grandpa used to take me to the Masters when I was in high school, and I wanted a win for him and for my parents, who helped me out financially during the early lean years. I also wanted the win for myself; caddieing has given me a nice life, but I still felt judged by some friends and past romantic relationships who never quite understood why I got into this or who looked at caddieing as a servant job. A win, I believed, would provide the validation I wanted from them.

ILLUSTRATION BY AVINASH WEERASEKERA

My player was a good person, but he could be passionate, and sometimes that would rub people the wrong way. I loved it. I knew it wasn't personal; he just held himself and others to a high standard and hated falling short of it, but on that Sunday, when he showed up to the course, he was as muted as he had ever been. His friends noticed it too; they thought it was an attempt to play it cool. Personally, I think he was reacting to the gravity of what was ahead. Think what it would be like to work your entire life for one goal, and it was now on the line.

We didn't play great on the front, but the score was good, and the leaders were struggling, so we were able to chip away at our deficit. Then it happened—to protect the innocent I won't say where it started or what we made or how we made it—but we went from firmly in contention to needing some magic in a hurry. I'm not trying to dramatize his reaction, but truthfully, when he handed me his putter, I thought he was in a state of shock.

I wish I could tell you I gave him some rah-rah speech. I didn't. I thought the best way to move forward was to act like it didn't happen. Besides, every hole at Augusta commands your full attention. Also, that wasn't the type of relationship I had with my player, and I worried it would be forced. I've often wondered, however, if that situation called for a little red-ass from me to get him back in the game. I don't think it would have made a difference, but keeping the status quo clearly didn't help, either.

The magic didn't happen. We walked away with par on a hole where we had a good look at birdie. It felt like we gave another shot back; then my player came completely undone. We barely made it off 18 before his eyes filled with tears, and he cried when he saw his mom 20 minutes later. It was the only time in two decades of good times and bad that I saw him cry.

We finished in the top 10, but we were wrecked afterward. It took me a few weeks to get over what happened. My player was in a funk for months. At one point his agent asked me if I thought he was depressed. Years later, my player told me he barely remembers what happened after the Masters. The first thing he recalls is throwing his wife a birthday party, and that was a week before the Fourth of July. More than any other event, the Masters is what he wanted, and he felt that was gone forever.

It turned out that week wasn't our only chance. We contended a few more times at major championships. But we were never as close as that week, which is why that one sticks with us. People ask how my life would have changed if we had won. I'm not sure. Maybe I would have a nicer apartment, but I'm on the road so much I don't have time for a house, and my place still suits me. Heaven forbid I lose my job and don't get it back, I'm comfortable enough where I'm not getting evicted. Also, I don't need that validation from anyone anymore. A win would certainly be sweet, but I'm at a point in my life where I know just being in contention for the Masters is a thing to be proud of.

For him I know the road that went untraveled. It would have changed his retirement. He got into broadcasting for a bit, and without much formal training he was sharp. He understood that with his playing résumé—good and respectable but far from great—he had a ceiling as to how far he could go. Most guys in the booth have a major to their names. Even as he was trying to move on, he told me, he couldn't; his past was dictating his future.

We are no longer together full-time, and though I still have a full-time gig on tour, I've picked up his bag on occasion during my off weeks. Still, that week at Augusta is never far off. He told me he was once at a country club outing, and someone asked if he could sign a flag. He said sure, only to be handed a Masters flag, and looking at it felt like a gut punch. "It still hurts," he told me. —WITH JOEL BEALL

Undercover Caddie says it's not the collapse that hurts. It's being helpless to stop it.

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‘Being Labeled a Prodigy Hasn’t Been Easy’

I asked myself, *Why are you playing golf?* Through the grind, I’d lost the answer to that question

By Lucy Li, with Keely Levins

NO ONE WILL LET ME FORGET my 2014 U.S. Women’s Open press conference at Pinehurst. I was 11 years old, spinning in my chair and eating ice cream as I answered questions. Eight years later, I have my LPGA Tour card. Through my career, being labeled as a prodigy hasn’t been easy. I’ve struggled with confidence and worked hard to avoid burnout.

When I was 7, I went with my mom to pick up my brother, Luke, from the range, and I started hitting balls. I fell in love with it instantly. I started beating Luke pretty quickly, and it was clear I was getting good fast. I took my school classes online because it made scheduling easier. I had a lot of friends through golf, so I don’t feel like I sacrificed anything.

LUCY LI
LPGA TOUR
AGE 20
LIVES REDWOOD SHORES, CALIF.

* * *

The summer I was 10, I qualified for the U.S. Women’s Amateur and the Public Links. I’m the youngest to qualify for the Am and the youngest to make it to Pub Links match play. I was 20 yards shorter than everyone because I was so small, not yet 5 feet tall, but I hit it straight. My proximity with my 3-wood was better than my wedges.

* * *

The next summer, I qualified for the inaugural Drive, Chip and Putt. My favorite golfer growing up was Bobby Jones. I knew the importance of Augusta National and remember stepping out on the perfect-looking grass, wondering if it was AstroTurf. I won my age group, and afterward we got to watch a practice round. First thing I did was go to Amen Corner. The azaleas are even more beautiful in person.

That summer I signed up for the U.S. Women’s Open qualifier at Half Moon Bay. I shot 74-68. I won the qualifier by seven shots. It was surreal. I was the youngest to ever qualify. I shot 78-78 to miss the cut, but my dream of being a professional golfer felt more real there than it ever had.

* * *

I got calls to do “Good Morning America” and things like that. My mom knew it was too much for an 11-year-old, so we said no to a lot. I went back to playing junior and amateur events. My parents always looked out for me as a person, not just a golfer.

* * *

I couldn’t avoid all the attention. People would ask, “When are you turning pro?” I had no idea. I felt the expectations. About that time, I met Johnny Miller through friends in the Bay Area. He’s become a great mentor. He helped me realize that just because I was the youngest to do a lot of things didn’t mean I had to turn pro right away.

* * *

Johnny and one of my other mentors, the late Mickey Wright who I met through the USGA, were both steadfast in not letting anyone touch my swing. I’d been to coaches in the past, but it’s important to be able to sort out problems yourself. Whenever I’m out of sequence, I look at videos. If I’m really stuck, I’ll have someone I trust troubleshoot it with me—like Johnny, my parents or Mickey before she passed away.

* * *

In 2019, at age 17, I wasn’t excited looking at my schedule. It was time for the next step: I turned pro. My parents trusted my decision. By 2020, I was on the Epson Tour and had three top-five finishes. I started out OK in 2021 but then missed four cuts in five Epson events. I spent the off-season finding my confidence, which is ironic because when I look back at what I did when I was little, the thing I remember most vividly is how confident I was.

* * *

I asked myself, *Why are you playing golf?* Through the grind, I’d lost the answer to that question. I play because I love to compete and get better. I went into 2022 focused on that versus the results, and it worked. I had fun. It produced my first pro win. I birdied 18 to force the playoff and finished it on the first hole with an eagle. A few weeks later I won again on the Epson Tour.

* * *

I felt a surge of confidence. I clinched my LPGA card through my position on the Epson Tour money list and got some early LPGA starts. I was in the final group at the Dana Open Sunday and played OK, but the experience made me even more excited to get out there.

* * *

Taking online classes at the University of Pennsylvania has been a lot to balance, but it helped me throughout last season. If I finished a round missing a four-footer, I couldn’t replay it in my head a thousand times. I’d have an assignment due in three hours. I’m going to major in data analytics and psychology. I’m focused on my golf career right now, but someday I’d like to use my degree in the tech, climate change or venture-capital spaces.

* * *

I can’t wait to play more internationally, especially in Asia. A goal of mine is to make the Solheim Cup team, but I know how hard it’ll be. It’s crazy how confident I was as a kid. If I lose self-belief, I’ll go back to that feeling.

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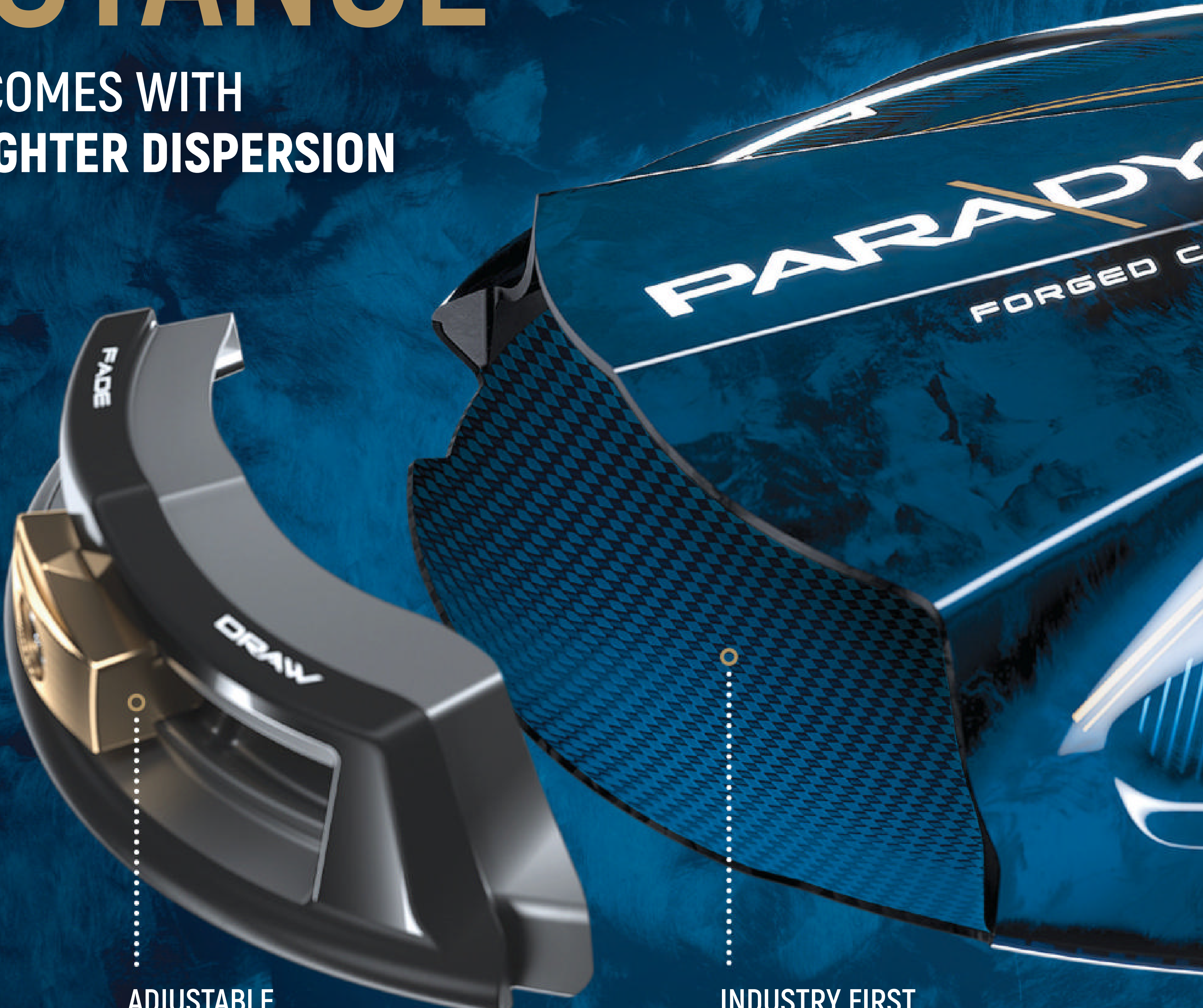
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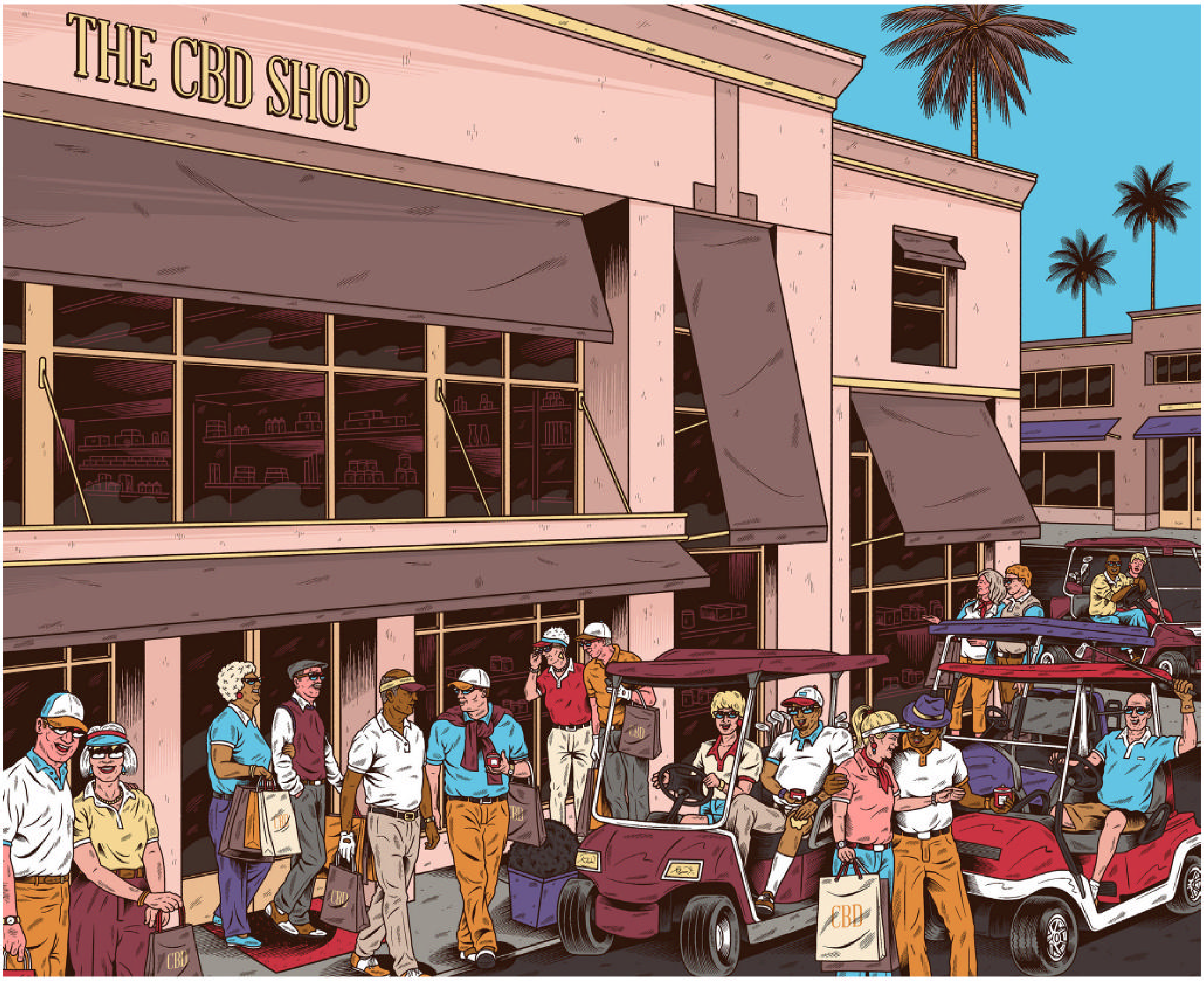

Golf and Chill

How a New York golf instructor became the exclusive CBD seller in The Villages

By Matthew Rudy

ENTREPRENEURS MIGHT have different definitions of a target-rich environment, but The Villages retirement metropolis in central Florida presents some formidable demographics for consideration. The snowbird haven 60 miles northwest of Orlando is teeming with more than 150,000 senior citizens with loads of disposable income and free time, and it offers golf courses and pickleball courts for them to stay active. Those facts were not lost on golf instructor Debbie Doniger—who serves the same clientele as the director of instruction at posh GlenArbor Golf Club in Bedford Hills, N.Y.

Doniger has long been interested in fitness and wellness and has investigated for clients the anti-inflammatory and relaxation benefits of CBD, a non-psychoactive compound found in the cannabis plant. A related compound from the same plant, THC, is high-inducing when consumed, but buzz-free CBD is now found in everything from chewing gum to roll-on balm. “My father was suffering from neuropathy, and he was on a tremendous amount of prescription medication,” Doniger says. “He was saying he just couldn’t take it anymore, and I wanted to see if there was something plant-based to help him with that pain.”

Doniger’s father started using a CBD transdermal patch, and the results were dramatic. “He said, ‘I could get my whole building in West Palm using this,' " she says. "Years ago, he had done business in The Villages, leasing medical supplies. He said it would be a perfect spot."

Doniger found a partner with experience in the segment—Jason Provost, who helped Martha Stewart start her CBD skin care line—and they created The Pharm Stand. The goal was to offer "mature" active people a curated retail experience that helps navigate the features and benefits (as well as the myths) around CBD. "I wanted to create a place where people could have a peaceful, highly individualized experience, where they could find help to get what they needed to feel better," Doniger says. "It's exactly how I run my golf instruction."

Doniger and Provost worked to sell The Villages on the concept of a high-end CBD shop that looks much more like a Crate and Barrel than a GNC Nutrition. Not only did The Villages embrace the presentation and make The Pharm Stand the only CBD provider inside the gates, it paved the way for Doniger and Provost to connect with The Villages Health Service so that physicians could use the shop as a resource for patients hoping to avoid more prescription drugs. "We're working with knowledgeable people to build a plan for a client, and we track the intervention to see what's working," Doniger says. "In the end, you see clients who are spending less money, feeling better and enjoying a much better quality of life."

After getting a lease approved for a storefront in the chic Brownwood section, where a Wolfgang Puck restaurant and a five-star hotel and spa are neighbors, Doniger and Provost had a year before the doors opened in August 2022 to begin building awareness among the residents. "We'd go into the farmer's markets and hear how much people wanted to be educated about CBD," Doniger says. "They want to understand the science behind it and if it's really true that this plant can help them. We build relationships with the doctors, with the golf academy, and with a lot of the clubs here. We've done everything from webinars to presentations at the rec centers."

The first questions almost always fall into one of two categories, Doniger says: Does CBD get you high, like marijuana, and does it work? "A subset of people who used marijuana in the 1960s and stopped are coming back to see what this is," Doniger says. "People who would never do illegal drugs want to make sure this is completely legitimate. Our goal is to show people the case studies, give them all the information they need and destigmatize this part of the wellness space."

Merchandise at the store is sorted by benefit—pain relief, sleep improvement and stress reduction. Instead of rows of product, each curated selection has a display card with highlights and benefits. The result is more like shopping at a high-end cheese or wine shop than visiting a drug store. "I find products where I know the owners and know the farms and know that the products are third-party tested," Doniger says. "Again, it's like how I've run my golf business. You don't have to sort through every single thing because I've already picked a selection of the best things to try."

Summer may be relatively quiet in Florida, but Doniger will be busy. She plans to add another store across the vast Villages metroplex, which covers an area larger than the island of Manhattan, and introduce her own line of Pharm Stand-branded CBD products which are in the final design stages. All of that will happen as she commutes almost weekly from metro New York City, where she teaches a full schedule at GlenArbor and raises two teenagers with husband and fellow teacher Kevin Sprecher, who is the director of instruction at Sleepy Hollow. "I like to try new things, but mostly I like to help people," Doniger says.

If her store catches on, Doniger will have a decidedly first-world problem particular to the transportation culture in The Villages: figuring out where all the customers will park their golf carts.

Matthew Rudy wishes he'd worn more sunscreen on those early 2000s photo shoots.

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Golf in the Forecast

'Today' show meteorologist Dylan Dreyer is an all-weather player

By Alex Myers

Like a renowned chef being asked for a restaurant recommendation or a professional race-car driver being told to parallel park, certain occupations come with certain expectations of expertise. It's no different when your day job involves predicting the weather—and your favorite hobby involves being outside. Such is the case for NBC's Dylan Dreyer, an avid golfer who is, predictably, a go-to source for friends curious about the forecast.

However, if you see Dreyer on your golf course, that doesn't mean you're in the clear. "There's pressure as a meteorologist who plays golf," says Dreyer, a weather correspondent on "Today" and an anchor on "3rd Hour of Today." "I remember we got washed out at Bethpage Black one time, and it was me and another meteorologist friend who came down from Boston. My husband looks at us, and he's like, 'What the hell is wrong with you guys?' Like, 'I'm playing golf with two meteorologists, and we're standing under a tree in the pouring rain.' "

In other words, this mother of three still has her tangles with Mother Nature. Forecasting the weather is a lot different than controlling the weather, but she did provide an endorsement that's a lot more valuable to fellow golfers than any restaurant recommendation.

"RadarScope is probably my most used app," Dreyer says. "The radar is definitely my best friend when we're out there and it doesn't look great."

Dreyer, 41, spends most of her mornings in front of a green screen and some of her afternoons on the greens, but it wasn't always that way. She gave golf a try about a dozen years ago thanks to the encouragement of now husband Brian Fichera. Rather than fully mix love with lessons, though, Dreyer, a native of New Jersey, found a golf coach who talked in terms of physics, which appealed to her science background.

"Oh, I would not be playing if Brian had been the only one teaching me," Dreyer says with a laugh. "It's a slow process picking it up a little later in life, but now I'm hooked."

In contrast, being on TV has come more naturally for Dreyer—well, other than the early wake-up calls. In fact, it's something that runs in the family if you count grandmother Doris Milke's record-breaking run as a contestant on the original "The Price Is Right" in 1963, winning prizes worth more than a half a million in today's dollars when adjusted for inflation. Dreyer doesn't get paid in cars and vacations, but she's become a morning fixture in homes—even if her on-screen persona doesn't totally match her on-course one.

"When I do TV, I can talk myself out of anything. If I start reading a question or thinking about a question, and it starts coming out of my mouth wrong, I can recover," Dreyer says. "With golf, it's not as easy for me to recover because you just get frustrated. You don't want people to see you getting frustrated because I'm the happy girl on TV. But, no, I really just wanna smash my club into the ground."

In addition to her "Today" duties, Dreyer has been involved in some of NBC's sports coverage, which includes the Open Championship and the Augusta National Women's Amateur. As much as she loves working at the site of the Masters, though, Dreyer enjoys covering the men's pro tour the most.

"There are so many women out there whose husbands are watching golf, and I want to show other women why it's fun to watch, too," Dreyer says. "Here's who you should follow. Here are the underdogs and the best stories to root for. This way you can at least watch and know what you're talking about."

Dreyer's husband, a cameraman for "NBC Nightly News," has watched his wife get to do some cool golf-related stuff in recent years. "He's like, 'Don't forget I introduced you to it!' " Dreyer says, and, of course, she hasn't. Brian remains her No. 1 partner. "I'm sure a lot of husbands look at it as a way to kind of escape the house for a little bit, but we're kind of ships passing," says Dreyer, who lives in Manhattan with Fichera and their three kids. "I work mornings, he works nights, and it's the thing we get to do together. It's four or

RAINS AND
POWER
Bryson

'I'm the happy girl on TV, [but every so often] I just wanna smash my club into the ground.'

PHOTOGRAPH BY MACKENZIE STROH

SUNNY DISPOSITION Dylan Dreyer in her NBC New York City office.

five hours where we're having some beers, we're catching up, we're outside. It feels like we're doing something active, and we've now started to plan vacations around it."

There's a week in July, though, that Dreyer hopes to keep on the calendar for a different type of trip. She has played at Lake Tahoe in the American Century Championship, a.k.a. the Super Bowl of Celebrity Golf, the past three years. It's a special event for Dreyer but also an intimidating spot for a 25-handicapper.

"It's tough keeping up with the pro athletes, who are so good at everything they do, and there are a lot of people out there. I hit someone my first year playing," says Dreyer, who credits a playing interview with Justin Thomas before the 2018 Ryder Cup with helping her learn to control her nerves. "I actually felt more pressure this past year when I wasn't pregnant because at least when you're pregnant, everybody's like, 'Oh, good job. Way to be out here.' But last year I was just a regular, so I didn't have any sympathy on my side."

It doesn't help having a standard bearer by your side displaying your score. "That leader board follows you around like, *Shame, shame, shame*," Dreyer says, referring to a well-known "Game of Thrones" scene. "It kept adding up to the point where one year, Doug Flutie said to the guy, 'Can you stop? She's well aware of her score.' "

Dreyer was unaware of a TV scene involving her profession that comes from an episode of "Curb Your Enthusiasm." In it, Larry David confronts a local weatherman while playing golf and accuses him of purposely giving bad forecasts to make the course less crowded. "That's a genius idea," Dreyer says.

Alex Myers is the type of golfer who heads in at the first sign of inclement weather.

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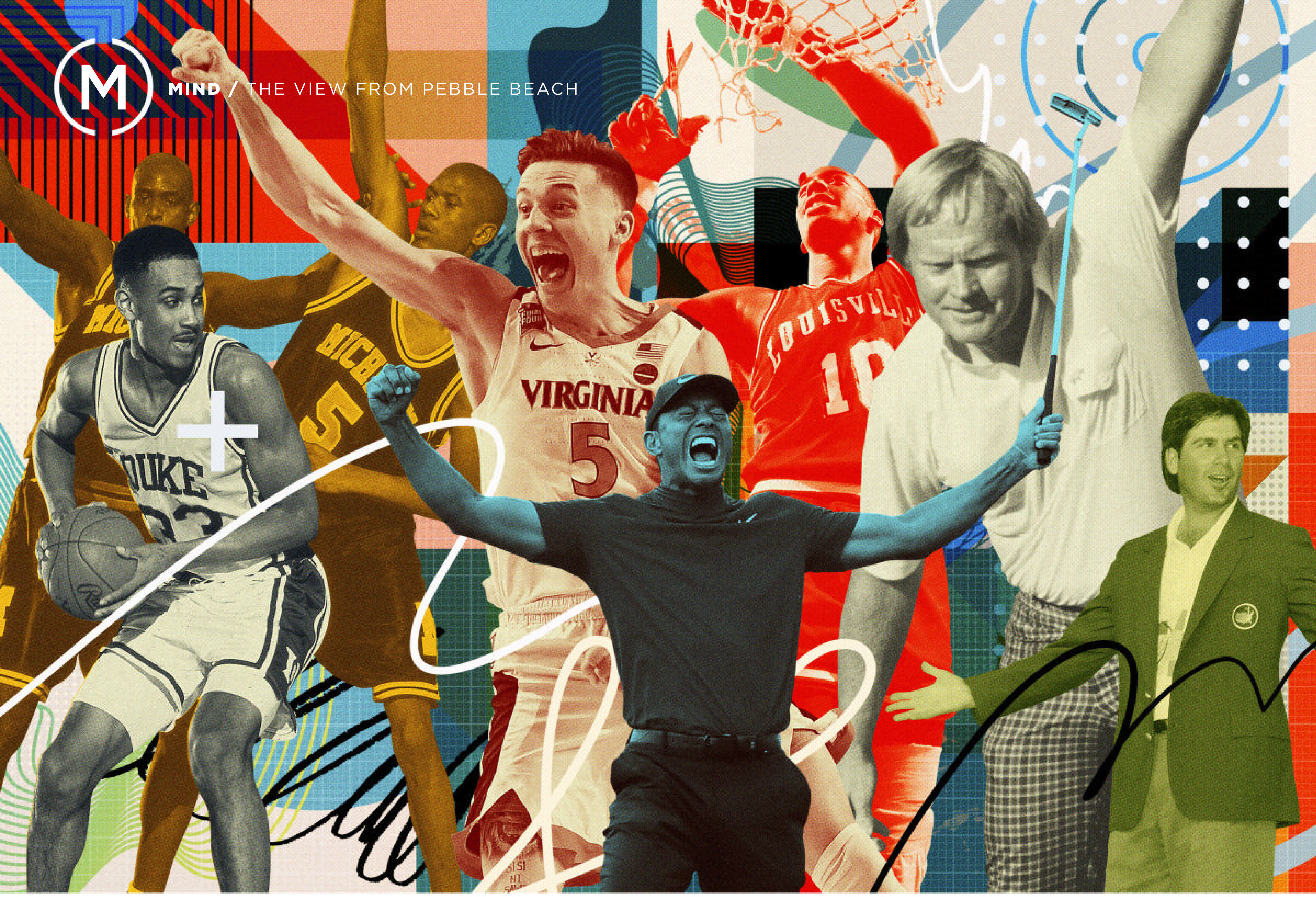

The Best Two Weeks in Sports

My all-time favorite back-to-back Final Four and Masters thrillers

By Jim Nantz

FOR THE PAST 37 YEARS I've navigated the back roads of South Carolina on a sojourn from Augusta to Hilton Head, savoring the highs of the previous two weeks—calling the Final Four of the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament, followed by the Masters. It's an exhilarating, intense run that is so concentrated with excitement that the best of the back-to-back NCAA/Masters thrillers don't always stand out immediately.

I have more time to reflect now. The 2023 NCAA tournament to be played in my college hometown of Houston will be my final call from courtside. The early-year schedule has always been packed with weekly NFL playoff games, including every third year the Super Bowl. We cover the PGA Tour's West Coast swing, of course, then March Madness and the Masters. This meant prolonged absences from home. The plaintive, "When are you coming home, Daddy?" queries from my children were resonating more with each passing year. It was time to cut back, and the NCAA tournament, as much as I love it, was the choice.

I arrived at CBS in the fall of 1985 and by the next spring had started what many refer to as the "greatest two-week run in sports." I've often been asked how I go from the fevered pitch of the national championship game on a Monday night to the subdued-voice reverence of the Masters three days later. It's simple: I get lost in the environment of each event, adapting my voice to levels that match the scene. Just as importantly, I've had family with me almost every step of the way, thanks to an early career life lesson.

At the 1986 Final Four played in Dallas, Brent Musburger and Billy Packer called the action for CBS, and I, at age 26 and four years out of college, served as host. Louisville beat Duke 72-69 in the championship game on Monday, but it was Friday's open practice for the four teams and my on-set walk-through for CBS that I remember most. My father had driven up from Houston and watched from the side while we went through a full rehearsal. His sense of pride was obvious, and when the practices ended, he promptly made the 250-mile drive back to Houston.

That evening, there was a bash at the Southfork Ranch of "Dallas" TV show fame. As we approached J.R.'s driveway, Bob Fishman, the legendary CBS director, asked me, "Where's your dad?"

I replied, "He went home."

Bob asked me why he hadn't stayed for the Final Four games. "He didn't have a ticket," I said.

Bob was aghast. "Did you ask our bosses for one?" he said in a stern, big-brotherly way. It hadn't occurred to me that I could have asked for tickets. Bob said, "We're family here at CBS. We would've gotten him in. Don't ever do something like that again." I gulped and instantly wished for a mulligan.

ILLUSTRATION BY SEAN MCCABE

At the Masters the next week, I was in the 16th-hole tower as Jack Nicklaus charged to his sixth and final Masters title. It was an honor to debut at Augusta with what many believe is the greatest Masters ever played, but the ticket blunder was still weighing on me. If only I could have shared Jack's victory with my dad!

Life has a way of allowing mistakes to be corrected. A year later, the 1987 NCAA Final Four was in New Orleans. In the championship game, Indiana's Keith Smart hit a jumper with four seconds left to lift the Hoosiers past Syracuse, 74-73. My dad was there to see it this time and so was my mother, who throughout my life had been my biggest fan and supporter. At the conclusion we drove to Augusta and stayed at a CBS rental house. My dad was in the gallery when Larry Mize chipped in at No. 11 to beat Greg Norman. The thrill my mom and dad expressed that evening was priceless.

At the 1992 NCAA Final Four in Minneapolis, Fred Couples arrived, having just wrapped up a golf version of March Madness. Earlier that winter he had won the Los Angeles Open and then Arnold Palmer's Bay Hill event by a whopping nine shots. So how did the world's No. 1-ranked player prepare for the next week's Masters? By serving, along with our close friend and college teammate Blaine McCallister, as runners for CBS. As Duke, Indiana, Cincinnati and Michigan squared off that Saturday, Freddie and Blaine were chasing down stats and other info for me and Billy Packer.

Before departing the Twin Cities that weekend, I took Fred aside and said, "We've talked about it, dreamed about and rehearsed it. I'll see you on Sunday in Butler Cabin. This is the year." In our college days I truly had "announced" Fred winning the Masters in our dorm room in Houston. On Sunday April 12 we were no longer just two kids playacting. Fred shot a gritty 70 to beat Raymond Floyd by two strokes. That evening, he arrived back at the rental house wearing the green jacket. Fred's closest friends were there waiting for him. Paul Marchand, his coach and former Houston teammate, was there, as was Lynn Roach, his longtime manager, and John Bracken, his childhood friend from Seattle. I was there with my dad. After a raucous greeting, Fred approached my father. "Mr. Nantz, I'd like you to be the first to try this jacket on," he said. There were tears of joy in the house that night. Given that Fred had won, and my dad was there to experience it, it was a day that remains the most cherished memory of my career.

The 2019 two-week double dip also holds a special place in my heart. The previous year Virginia entered the tournament as the No. 1 overall seed but promptly lost to University of Maryland, Baltimore County, in the first round. It was arguably the biggest upset in college basketball history and the type of shattering defeat that can scar a team and a program, but it didn't faze Coach Tony Bennett's team. In 2019, they fought their way through the bracket to the championship game against Texas Tech. The Cavaliers pulled away in overtime and completed "the all-time turnaround title" and won the school's first national championship.

The next week at the Masters, I had my family with me and even took my son Jameson, age 3, down to Amen Corner for the first time. Several days later, a golfer who many had written off—Tiger Woods—executed a turnaround of his own. When his final putt fell for his fifth Masters victory, I exclaimed, "The return to glory!"

I wasn't speaking just of the glory that comes with his achievement as a player. Seeing Tiger's children, Sam and Charlie, and his mother, Tida, waiting behind the 18th green waiting to embrace him—and recalling the hug between Tiger and his father, Earl, in 1997—another type of glory was at hand: the affirmation that sports and everyday life are best enjoyed as a shared experience with friends and family.

Jim Nantz has spent a year and a half of his life on-site at the Final Four and Masters.

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A Game That Punches Above Its Weight

How to fix the boxing match that has become pro golf

By Jerry Tarde

PGA TOUR
GOLF

JENS TANDLER/EYEEM/GETTY IMAGES

OTHER PRO SPORTS ARE judged by the size of their fan base, and in that sense, golf will never be a major sport. Eighty-two of the top-100-rated shows on television last year were NFL games; 94 were sports programming, but golf wasn't even close. The National Dog Show on Thanksgiving has a larger audience than the Masters, and worldwide soccer eclipses American football. The reality check is, Cristiano Ronaldo has 547 million followers on Instagram; Tiger Woods has 3.1 million. When we hear pro golfers complain that they don't make enough money compared to other athletes, we have to laugh.

That brings us to the troubled times of professional golf, the Saudi challenge and the PGA Tour's response: How did we get where we are and where do we go from here?

The first mistake was the Saudi's Public Investment Fund hiring Greg Norman as commissioner to spearhead its incursion into golf. Norman was viewed as toxic by all the institutions of the game. He had no interest in compromise. He had a vendetta against the PGA Tour, which had embarrassed him when he tried to launch a similar world tour with Rupert Murdoch in the 1990s. Add to the mix Phil Mickelson, who, devoid of self-awareness, accused the tour of "obnoxious greed."

The PGA Tour considered it a hostile takeover. I'm reminded of Ted Tinling's description of tennis star Martina Navratilova: "She goes from arrogance to panic with nothing in between." The tour's mistake was in refusing to take a meeting. Every CEO I've talked with says the tour should have met with the Saudis. Their PIF was already in golf with a big event on the European DP World Tour. Jack Nicklaus and others were designing courses in the kingdom. The Saudis weren't banned from world sport. They fielded teams in the World Cup and the Olympics. They were players in the financial markets and real estate. Politically the U.S. looked the other way with fighter jets and oil. Even the way women were treated in that part of the world was ignored in the spirit of "they'll change eventually."

What made this different was the enormity of the timing. It came after the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. The visible horror wasn't like the Russians poisoning a dissident in a dark alley. "Dismemberment isn't a word you forget," said one golf bureaucrat. This was hugely ugly. The Saudis had hosted major sporting events and even bought a football club in the Premier League, but owning a pro golf tour was more glaring. (It wasn't public at the time, but they were rebuffed when the PIF tried to buy Formula 1 last year.) Outside North America, the business world may be less sensitive, but a backlash was waiting to happen here.

More mistakes followed. Both sides defined their motivation in terms of "the good of the game," which wasn't true, of course. Then it got nasty among the warring pros. Tees were thrown.

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GOLF'S X-FACTOR The game stands apart because of its participants.

DAVID CANNON/GETTY IMAGES

In matters of commerce, I often ask myself the question, *What would Mark McCormack do?* McCormack discovered Arnold Palmer and practically invented the business of golf as its first super agent, but the author of *What They Don't Teach You at Harvard Business School* has the benefit of being deceased.

Knowing his genius for taking the money without giving away the store, I think Mark would have looked at the Saudis as an opportunity, not a problem. A suitor was standing at the front door with a couple of billion dollars in a duffle bag. Your fiduciary responsibility was to invite him in for a cup of coffee. The ultimate pragmatist would have slowed down the decision-making, would not have allowed either side to harden their positions and certainly would not have turned it into a Holy War. He would have found a way to go around Norman and deal directly with Mohammed bin Salman or at least the royal family. He would have Henry Kissingered it. First and foremost, he would have asked what the Saudis wanted from golf and found a way to give it to them. What's the real objective? Sports washing, influence, respect, profit, tourism, a green jacket? Not enough time was spent figuring this out.

To the PGA Tour, McCormack would say there's no upside to a confrontation with an enemy that has endless resources. Your friends may not be your allies. The four majors will act in their self-interest. The Open Championship or the Masters or the U.S. Open will not side with the tour if it means weakening their events or excluding the top players. The majors will always remain independent, and the game is better for it.

McCormack would not have drawn the battle lines exclusively to benefit the top 20 players in the world. He would not have split the PGA Tour's tournaments in two, with the bottom half turned into second-class sponsors. He would have asked, "How can we use this opportunity to do something for the bigger game, not just the most elite players?" The obvious solution would have been women's golf but probably also included promoting the game internationally. It might not have worked, but the dialogue would have led to something other than lawsuits.

In the end, this whole matter will be resolved because the gravity of capital brings businesses together. Consequences follow, slowly then quickly. From players to administrators to media, resolution affects all the actors.

Ten years from now I have a feeling we'll ask ourselves why we took it all so seriously. LIV Golf likely won't be long term, but just wait till sovereign funds start buying NFL franchises.

Golf stands apart because it's based on active participants, not audiences. The success of the NFL or NBA isn't rooted in people who play football or basketball. Their fan bases may be much larger, but golf is about people who actually play the game, who have a stake in the outcome.

In this turbulence, the game we play has never been stronger as COVID has taught us to prize our time at home. The World Golf Report, a newly released economic study of the global sales of golf equipment and apparel conducted by Golf Datatech and the Yano Research Institute of Japan, shows the golf business has grown 30 percent since 2019. Participation in America has surpassed 40 million golfers for the first time, according to the National Golf Foundation. The game is at its most diverse—more women (25 percent of all on-course golfers) and people of color (22 percent) are playing. But it's how we play that is the essential strength of the game: the belief that golf is played with integrity, that we start and end every round with a handshake or fist-bump, and that golfers give back.

Every hacker I know contributes to charity through golf, certainly some more than others, but it's in the DNA of the game. I saw it first-hand at the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am in February; it's the most charitable event on the PGA Tour, raising $18 million for local charities this year alone. American golfers overall raise $3.9 billion annually for college scholarships and homeless shelters and every imaginable good cause in between.

The First Tee is golf's most successful charity primarily because it teaches kids what's called the nine core values of the game: honesty, integrity, sportsmanship, respect, confidence, responsibility, perseverance, courtesy and judgment. There's a message here for pro golf that non-golfers might not understand. We not only play the game but actively learn from it. Golf punches above its weight.

Jerry Tarde has covered 41 Masters Tournaments but not a single National Dog Show.

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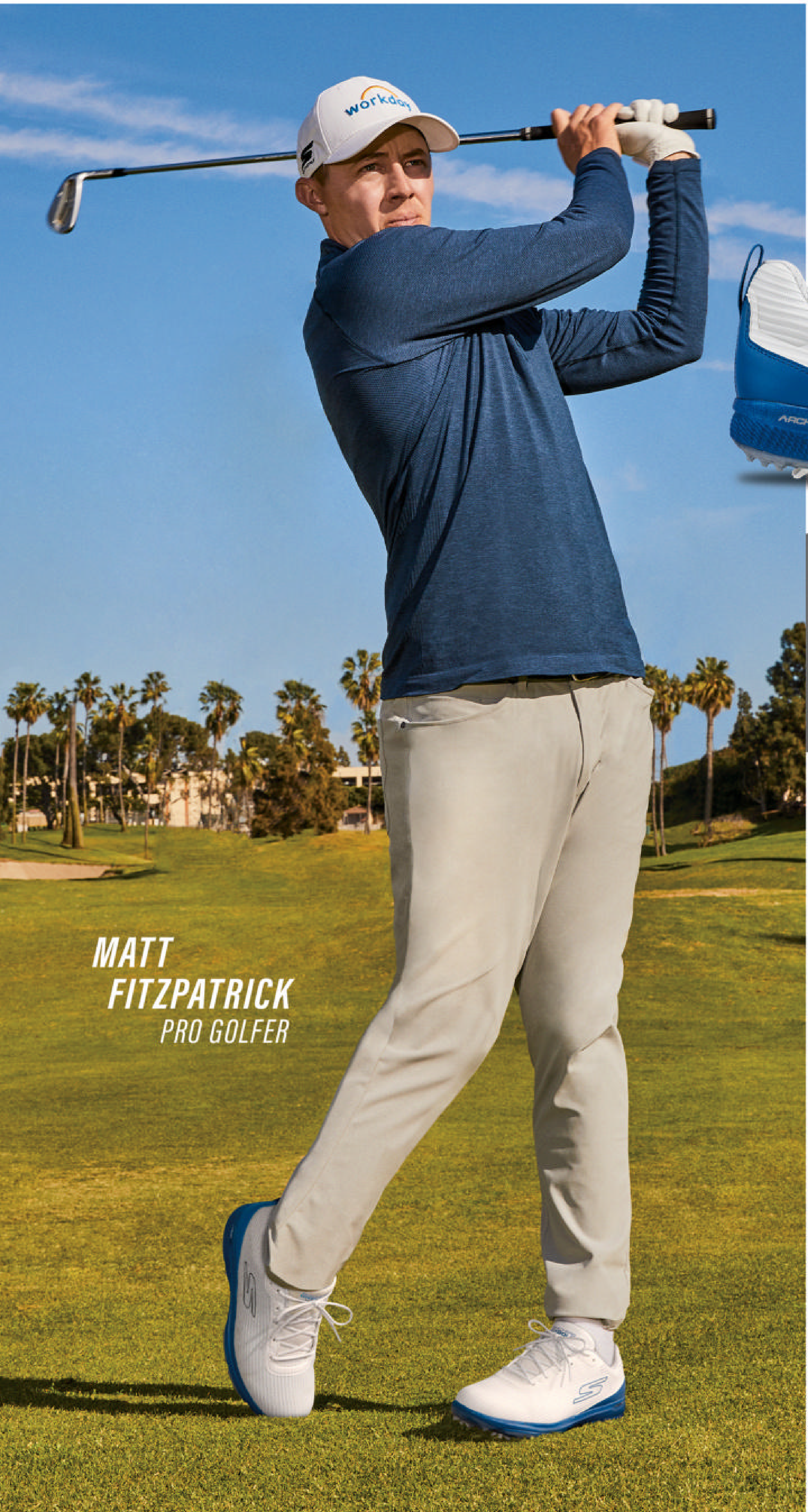
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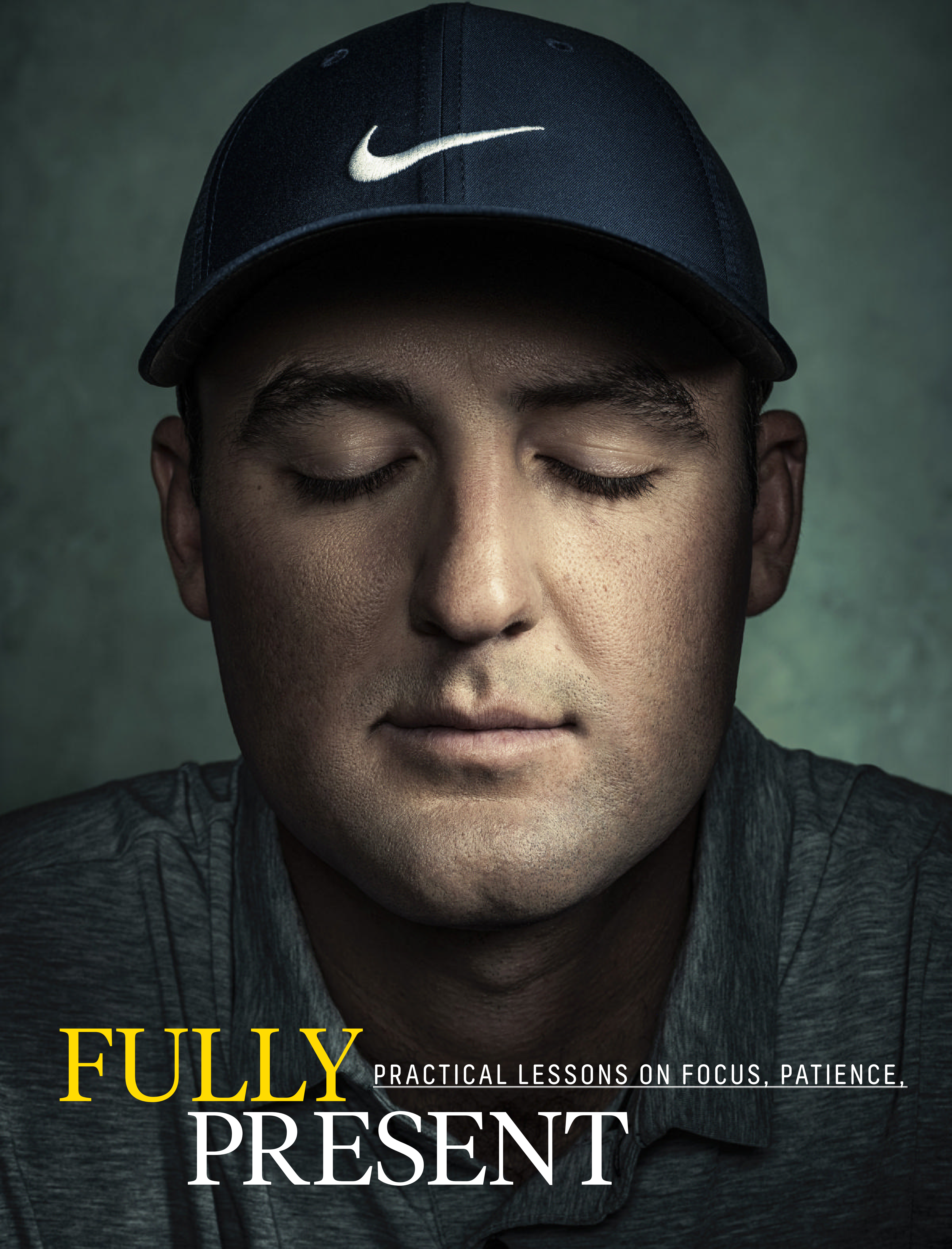

FULLY PRESENT

PRACTICAL LESSONS ON FOCUS, PATIENCE,

2023
MASTERS PREVIEW

NERVES AND INTENT FROM WORLD NO. 1 **SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER**

BY MATTHEW RUDY

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAN WINTERS

It took Scottie Scheffler all of 92 professional starts to get to World No. 1. Tiger Woods (21 starts) and Jordan Spieth (77) are the only two to do it faster, and neither of those guys spent a year in the so-called minor leagues like Scheffler did.

His meteoric rise, which included a win at last year's Masters Tournament, wasn't the result of a breakthrough swing tip or new exercise routine. He had a season for the ages by being the same person he has always been—consistent and relentless. Scheffler's primary skill—aside from virtuoso hand-eye coordination and ultra-alpha competitiveness—is the ability to deal with only what's in front of him. Many players get triggered by the past or the future—not Scottie.

You might think that type of focus, to stay fully present at all times, is reserved for the game's elite, but Scheffler and his longtime coach, Randy Smith, say it's a skill you can learn and use, too. It doesn't mean turning into an emotionless robot on the course or training yourself to somehow go blank when the pressure turns up. In fact, it means letting yourself be more human and more reactive, but with a process on how to handle it—and how to embrace the challenge as more fun.

Read on if you're ready to play more "in the now."

YOU DO YOU

With all due respect to the WM Phoenix Open's 16th-hole stadium hysteria, the beer-fueled rowdiness in the desert has nothing on the focused, patriotic intensity of a Ryder Cup crowd. The sound coming from the thousands surrounding Whistling Straits' first tee for the 2021 singles match between Scheffler and then World No. 1 Jon Rahm "was like being inside a jet engine," Smith says. "I've never seen or heard anything like it in my life."

Neither had Scheffler. A year removed from being named PGA Tour Rookie of the Year but still winless at the top level, Scheffler did have success that hinted at his potential—U.S. Junior Amateur champion, Korn Ferry Player of the Year. But on this stage, this early in his professional career, the moment could have been paralyzing.

"I didn't have anything to compare it to," Scheffler says. "You hear players say winning a match at the Ryder Cup is like winning a major. There's so much more weight because you're also playing for the other 11 guys, captains and vice captains and the thousands of people out there. At the Masters, it's just me, my caddie and a small team. If I fail, they still love me. If you fail at the Ryder Cup, you're letting down the whole country."

Once Scheffler's tee went into the ground that fall day, the stress and anxiety from the run-up to the match receded. He went through his usual routines and mannerisms, down to his familiar shirt shoulder tug and thousand-yard stare. It was as if he was playing a random off-week match against his buddies with only $50 on the line.

"It doesn't matter where I'm playing, I'm just an amped-up person, excited to compete. The buildup can be a challenge, but when you get out there, all of that melts away. Then it's just, *I know what I'm doing. I can play this game.*"

In that Ryder Cup match, Scheffler birdied the first four holes and never let the previously undefeated Rahm rally. He put the first singles point on the board for the victorious American team and went 2-0-1 in his matches. That performance set the table for an incredible stretch when, in the span of five events, he rose to No. 1 in the World Golf Ranking with wins at the WM Phoenix Open, the Arnold Palmer Invitational, and the WGC-Dell Technologies Match Play. If that wasn't enough, he followed that with a victory at the Masters, his first major.

Your first lesson, Scheffler says, is to stick with your habits, your mannerisms, your style of play—no matter what you're up against. The atmosphere might feel different, but you're not.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE PERFECT—NOT EVEN CLOSE

Watching golf on television can give the impression that the best players in the world are flushing almost every shot. It's true that a lot of things have to go right to win a tournament at any level, but that doesn't mean it's necessary to stay mistake free to play really well.

"In Phoenix [in 2022], I learned it doesn't take perfect golf to win," says Scheffler, who picked up his first tour victory after a three-hole playoff against veteran Patrick Cantlay. "I came from

DRIVER: STRETCH YOUR CHEST

Transitioning too fast is a big reason you don't hit it as far—or as straight—as you can, says Scheffler's coach, Randy Smith, one of Golf Digest's 50 Best Teachers in America. "If you don't get a full stretch in your chest on the backswing, the downswing happens too fast relative to your body's timing, the club gets to the ball too early, and a slice or pull is the likely result." Instead, keep stretching as you swing back. Don't stop until you feel the weight of the clubhead 'tip over' at the top."

PUTTING: NEUTRALIZE YOUR GRIP

No matter what style putter or stroke you use, stability through impact is key, Smith says. For many players, that will be much easier with a simple adjustment: "You have to be careful not to let the lower hand go on the handle in a 'too strong' position, like it would be for a full shot," Smith says. "When both hands are neutral—meaning the lower hand is weaker and oriented more toward the target, you're going to have much more stability."

SHORT SHOTS: FOLLOW YOUR PIVOT

With all short-game shots, one thought that can dramatically improve the quality of your impact is, *Let your club follow your pivot.* "If your body stops on the way through, or you stop the club at the ball, you'll never have a consistent bottom to your swing, and there goes predictability, and any consistency," Smith says. "Pivot toward your target, and let the clubhead flow through the ball and finish at the spot you picked."

‘WHEN I’M PLAYING MY BEST, I’M FOCUSED ON THE TARGET, THE SHOT SHAPE. . . . I’M NOT THINKING ABOUT SWING MECHANICS.’

behind there, and I made three or four bogeys in the first 12 holes on a course where you have to go out and make a bunch of birdies. When I got to Bay Hill, I was struggling. I had to keep telling myself everybody else was struggling, too, because the course was so hard. I thought, *Just stay patient.* Knowing it’s OK to make some mistakes is freeing. You can stop thinking about what’s going to happen on the next hole, or what the guys behind you are doing, or where the ball is going to end up, and just try to hit a good shot. Then get to the next shot and try to do it again.”

BURY YOURSELF IN THE PROCESS

At the 2022 Masters, his tee shot on the 18th on Saturday afternoon was like a needle scraping across a record. He pulled it deep into the thick line of trees and bushes that form part of the “vegetation tunnel” you have to get through to find the fairway. Before that big miss, Scheffler had been cruising, building a four-shot lead over Cameron Smith. As he got to the area where his ball landed, and it still hadn’t been located, his first feeling was a flash of panic and the next was to second guess: *Why did that happen? Was I trying to hit it too hard? Was I not fully committed to the shot?* “Those feelings and thoughts come first—and that’s all right,” Scheffler says. “But how quickly can you reset and get into ‘solutions mode?’ I have to go find my ball in the woods. OK, found it. Can’t hit it. What can I do? How do I get to a place where I can hit it?”

Scheffler dropped in the pine straw and ripped a high, hard 3-iron that hit the green and ended up just off the back edge. He wound up making bogey, but it was more of a triumph than a defeat, preserving a comfortable cushion leading into Sunday.

“That’s the thing Tiger has been so good at,” Scheffler says. “When he’s in those situations, all he’s thinking about is trying to execute the shot. He isn’t worried about if it’s going to work out. He’s fully committed to what he’s doing. I’m just trying to get as close to that as possible. When I’m playing my best, I’m focused on my target, the shot shape. I’m getting so focused on what I’m trying to do with the golf ball that I’m not thinking about swing mechanics. I’m not thinking about anything other than good rhythm and feeling where the shot is going.”

PRACTICE WITH REAL INTENT

The emphasis here is on the mental game, Scheffler says, but that doesn’t mean mechanics don’t matter. They do, but you probably have to change your relationship with them—and how you approach technical improvement. That was one of the biggest adjustments Scheffler made going from college golf at Texas to the PGA Tour.

“I’ve always been very good at being focused, but I focused on random stuff—like games on the range and trying to hit a certain pole or something,” Scheffler says. “Keeping practice fun is important, but ultimately the practice you’re putting in needs to serve what you’re trying to accomplish when you play. There are certain guys you can watch out on the range, like Patrick Cantlay or Justin Thomas, and you immediately see that they’re intentional and focused. I used to be able to spend all day out there, but now I just don’t have as much time or energy because there’s just more stuff going on. I can’t be ready for what happens on Sunday if I’m wasting a bunch of time Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.”

The takeaway for you is to come into a range session with a single, specific thing to accomplish. Treat it like a mission. “One of the big benefits of the Ryder Cup was, for the development process, it showed me the max amount of pressure I could feel. That really informed the way I practiced after that,” Scheffler says. “You know what you were feeling and thinking over those shots, so you can start to practice to prepare for those scenarios.”

PUT IT AWAY

At any level—and especially at the highest level—managing failure is a fundamental part of the game. Shots don’t always work. Players lose tournaments. Other players play well to win. Even Scheffler’s career year ended on an off note when he let a six-shot lead get away on Sunday at the Tour Championship. Keeping the losses in the proper perspective can make them fuel for future success instead of scar tissue.

“Tiger didn’t make every putt and win every tournament,” Scheffler says. “What happened at East Lake at the Tour Championship, or being one shot away from winning the U.S. Open, I’m never going to forget those tournaments. Those experiences are good lessons when it comes to putting in the work. Even though the good and bad memories will stick with me, they don’t hang over my head every day. When I get home, I’m home. I’m just trying to have fun. Golf’s one part of my life, but it’s not my entire life.”

Even there, he’s fully present.

IRONS: TAKE THE SLAP OUT

Scheffler hits more balls than virtually anyone on the planet, Smith says. He even carries a club with a reminder grip for practice. “Every player’s grip drifts, which means every player needs to be checking it,” Smith says. Scheffler’s issue was the handle drifted up and his lower hand was almost off the club. The subtle change in feel made his hands more active, giving him the impression he was slapping at the ball. Your hands should play a more passive role in the swing, Smith says, so adjust your grip to reduce the impulse to hit at the ball with them.

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2023
MASTERS
PREVIEW

GROWING PRESSURE

THE HOME OF THE MASTERS CONTENDS WITH LIV, DISTANCE, PROPERTY EXPANSION AND ITS OWN IMPOSSIBLE STANDARDS

BY JOEL BEALL

ILLUSTRATION BY RYAN JOHNSON

IT'S KNOWN AS "THE PLAN," AND IT HAS BEEN PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGED. AT THE 2016 MASTERS, BILLY PAYNE, THEN CHAIRMAN OF AUGUSTA NATIONAL GOLF CLUB, WAS ASKED ABOUT THE CLUB'S DEVELOPMENT OF THE WESTERN SIDE OF THE PROPERTY.

Payne politely laughed off questions about specifics, but he provided insight into the club's strategy. "Corporately, we plan 20 years down the road," Payne said. "We have plans for every couple years of iteration going all the way out to 20 years. That, of course, is subject to dramatic change depending on who the chairman is at the time."

Some changes patrons will encounter at the 2023 Masters were envisioned around the turn of the century. They include a redesigned Par-3 Course for the tournament's Wednesday contest that will have more patron viewing areas, a new entrance for patrons, a merchandise pavilion that will exit to Washington Road on the east side of the course, two new cabins (one of which is rumored to be a steakhouse for members) and a 40-yard extension of the famed 13th hole. The club plans reach far into the future. Among the rumored ambitions are a banquet hall, on-site housing for all Masters competitors and media, a tournament-only exit off I-20 that goes straight to Augusta National's parking lot, a reimagined fan village and a new golf course that presumably would host the opening rounds of the Augusta National Women's Amateur. "Whether or not my 20-year plan would be embraced by the person that follows me is, you know, subject to debate," Payne said. Yet, for all that Augusta National can plan, there remains plenty it cannot.

FEW THINGS IN SPORTS ARE AS venerated as the Masters Tournament. It is the closest thing the game has to a holiday, a gathering not only of the best players but of zealous fans, socialites, the media, power brokers, aspiring parvenus, vendors, salesmen and those simply trying to get warm by the fire.

The tournament's perception as a dependable, unchanging entity in an ever-changing world is one of many reasons the Masters is beloved. However, as much as Augusta National honors the past, the club has been mindful of the future. The Masters was the first 72-hole tournament to be played across four days; the first tournament to use leader boards and the over/under-par scoring system; the first to introduce grandstands and gallery ropes; the first to be broadcast on radio, in color on television, in 3-D and streamed to let fans see every shot hit on every hole. What the club hasn't introduced it has improved, from efforts as advanced as the agronomic methods and subterranean turf-conditioning system needed to keep the course in pristine shape to notions as elementary as concession efficiency. Everything related to the Masters experience is excellence personified.

However, excellence must be defended, and growing pressures warrant consideration. How the game is played has been transformed by equipment advancements. The LIV controversy, which has ripped the professional game apart, has dragged the club into a lawsuit backed by Saudi Arabia's wealth fund and entangled the club in an antitrust probe from the Department of Justice. Augusta's standard of excellence presents challenges when considering its direction. Does Augusta National run the Masters or vice versa? Aggressive expansion in influence and physical footprint has transformed Augusta National from a club that hosts a tournament into a club whose actions and direction matter well beyond four days in April. Some pressing questions need to be answered to maintain this station and continue the club's trajectory.

IN 2016, PAYNE'S ANSWER WAS IN response to a question about the club's acquisition of an entire neighborhood obtained plot by plot over the course of 30 years, ultimately turning that neighborhood into a parking lot. Yes, the club bought an entire neighborhood that, currently, is used for parking one week of the year. However, multiple members and former workers at the club suggest the plan spans more than 20 years. "It's closer to 30, 40 years down the road," says one member, who has been with the club for more than two decades. Another person familiar with the club's business dealings clarified that the plan has no end point; rather, it is constantly augmented and rolls on.

Much of the plan's reach is tied to the club's land acquisition. How much land the club has acquired and how much money it has allocated are a bit of a mystery because the club obscures these dealings using limited-liability companies rather than the club proper. A Wall Street Journal report in 2019 estimated the club spent more than $200 million during the previous 20 years buying up neighboring land, but this figure, multiple longtime members say, remains well short of the true number. What's the real figure? "Whatever you want to

LEADING THE WAY
Billy Payne (top), Augusta chairman from 2006 to 2017, gave the club an entrepreneurial bent. Current chairman Fred Ridley (above) sees his role as a custodian to the game.

PAYNE: EZRA SHAW/GETTY IMAGES • RIDLEY: DAVID CANNON/GETTY IMAGES

guess, it's going to be wrong," another veteran member says.

In recent years these purchases have become more public, with most of the reported procurements being businesses on Washington Road, the four-lane highway that runs past the front gates. (The club acquired a 15-acre shopping center across the street for $26 million and a former Wendy's by the intersection of Washington and Berckmans for $3.4 million.) Members say remaining areas of pursuit include property near I-20, more plots on Washington Road, land south of the Berckmans Road lot and a neighborhood east of the Par-3 Course. What's fueling these purchases and their development harkens to Payne's comment about improving the tournament. It also suggests Augusta National makes a lot of money through the Masters and doesn't know what to do with it. By reinvesting that capital, the club limits taxes on its fortune.

Each improvement and addition has been met with almost consensus approval by the public. However, some members worry that the changes have no end in sight. Eventually so much will change that what is already loved will be unrecognizable. "So far, it hasn't happened," says one longtime member. "With every new project that agita is there. No one bats a thousand."

The person who gave the plan a more enterprising lean—and who arguably had the biggest impact on the club since founders Bobby Jones and Cliff Roberts—was Payne. A former football player at the University of Georgia, Payne rose to prominence as an advocate for bringing the Summer Olympics to Atlanta. He succeeded, an achievement that led the Atlanta Journal-Constitution to dub Payne a "folk hero" in the Peach State. A decade later, Payne was named the sixth chairman of Augusta National, after Hootie Johnson, a man whose progressive business legacy was marred by his complicated response to cries for the club to allow female members. Controversy aside, Payne inherited a comfortable position.

Payne was like a politician, front and center and involved in everything he could be. He had pride in who he represented and used any platform he could to spread that esteem. Payne saw the Masters for what it was and could be. "Before Billy, when you were invited into Augusta National [as a member], you felt like you made it," one former USGA executive with ties to the club says. "Billy turned that feeling from an accomplishment into a galvanizing force. Billy didn't care about finish lines. He wanted you to be excited about the next race."

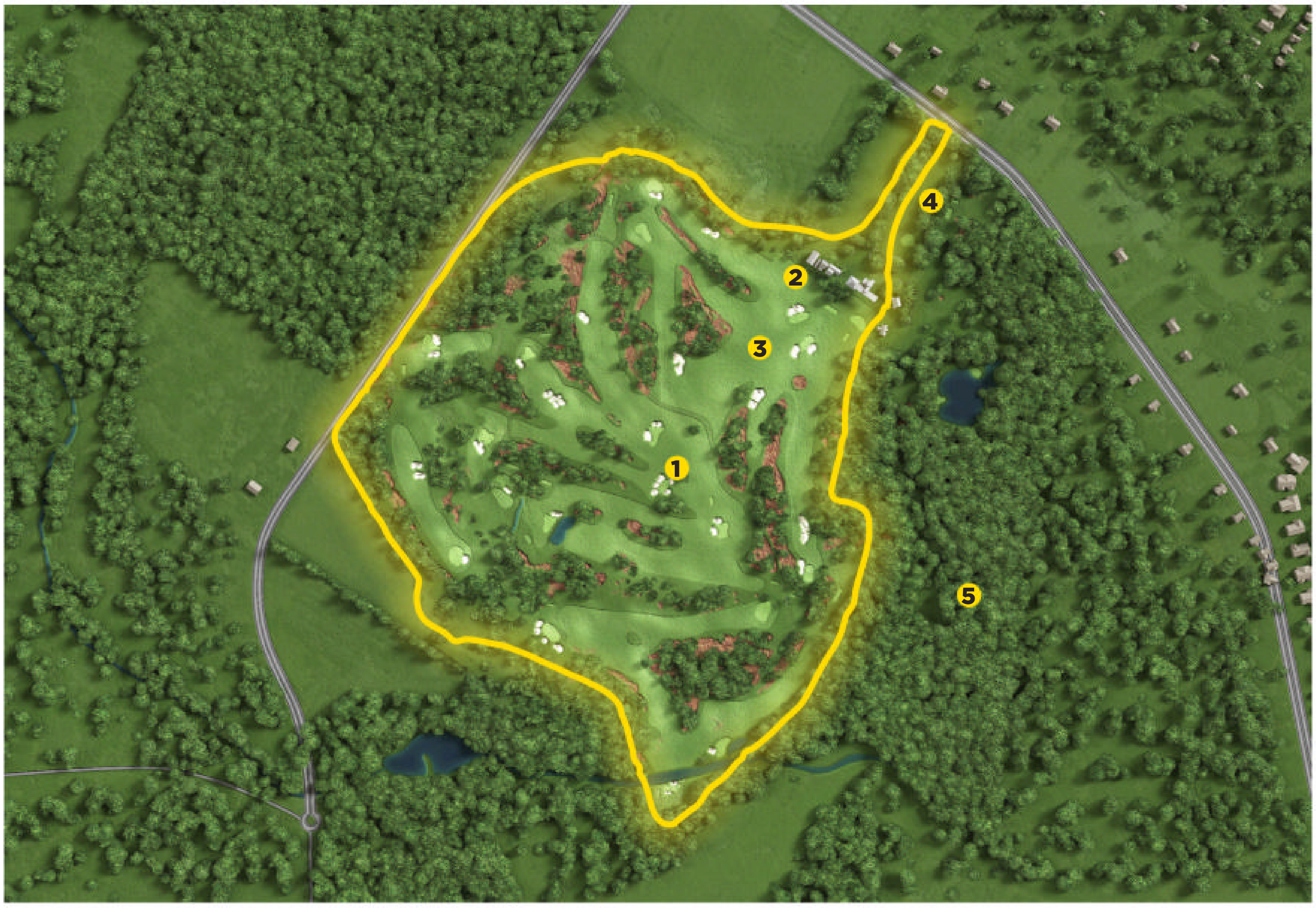
Payne was a real estate lawyer, and though land acquisitions were well underway when he took over, he sent the efforts into overdrive, believing what the club could achieve was limited only by the property at its disposal. He was a leader who was a commanding presence and astute tactician, and his reign coincided when golf's other families—the USGA, PGA of America, PGA Tour and R&A—lost the veneers of their power because of public missteps or were led by individuals lacking Payne's magnetic personality. Rather than isolation from these bodies, Payne worked to build relationships with them, which proved to be a catalyst for grow-the-game initiatives like the Drive, Chip and Putt and amateur championships in Asia and Latin America. Payne was socially conscious and understood the need to modernize the club, bringing in women as members to end almost a century of discrimination. Said one former PGA of America executive, "Payne wanted what was best for his club, but that didn't have to be mutually exclusive of what was good for the sport."

Payne was also a businessman, and one of the lessons he learned from his Olympic experience, multiple people who worked with Payne say, concerned the over commercialization of the event. Payne was aghast at the volume of peddlers not associated with the city or the games that descended on the South, feeling they were not only diminishing the reputation of the Olympics but making money off the work of others. "Billy saw himself as a civil servant," a member says, referring to Payne's Olympic duties. "He wanted to show the world the best of Atlanta. He wasn't naive to the commerce, retail and the like that would follow. He knew what it could do for the economy, but to Billy there was a right way and wrong way to do business. He couldn't stand the amount of hucksters and that he was powerless to stop them."

This is how the club had come to view what happened outside its walls during Masters week, including the secondary ticket market charging exponentially higher rates for Masters badges than prices the club issued them for, home owners renting out their residences for tens of thousands of dollars for the week and charging hundreds for cars to park on their lawns and pop-up stores hawking knockoff memorabilia on Washington Road. Payne saw these endeavors as barnacles and was adamant about ridding them from the club's underside. This thinking led to expansion plans like a new highway exit that would keep patrons away from the street market. Fans should not have to pay more for parking

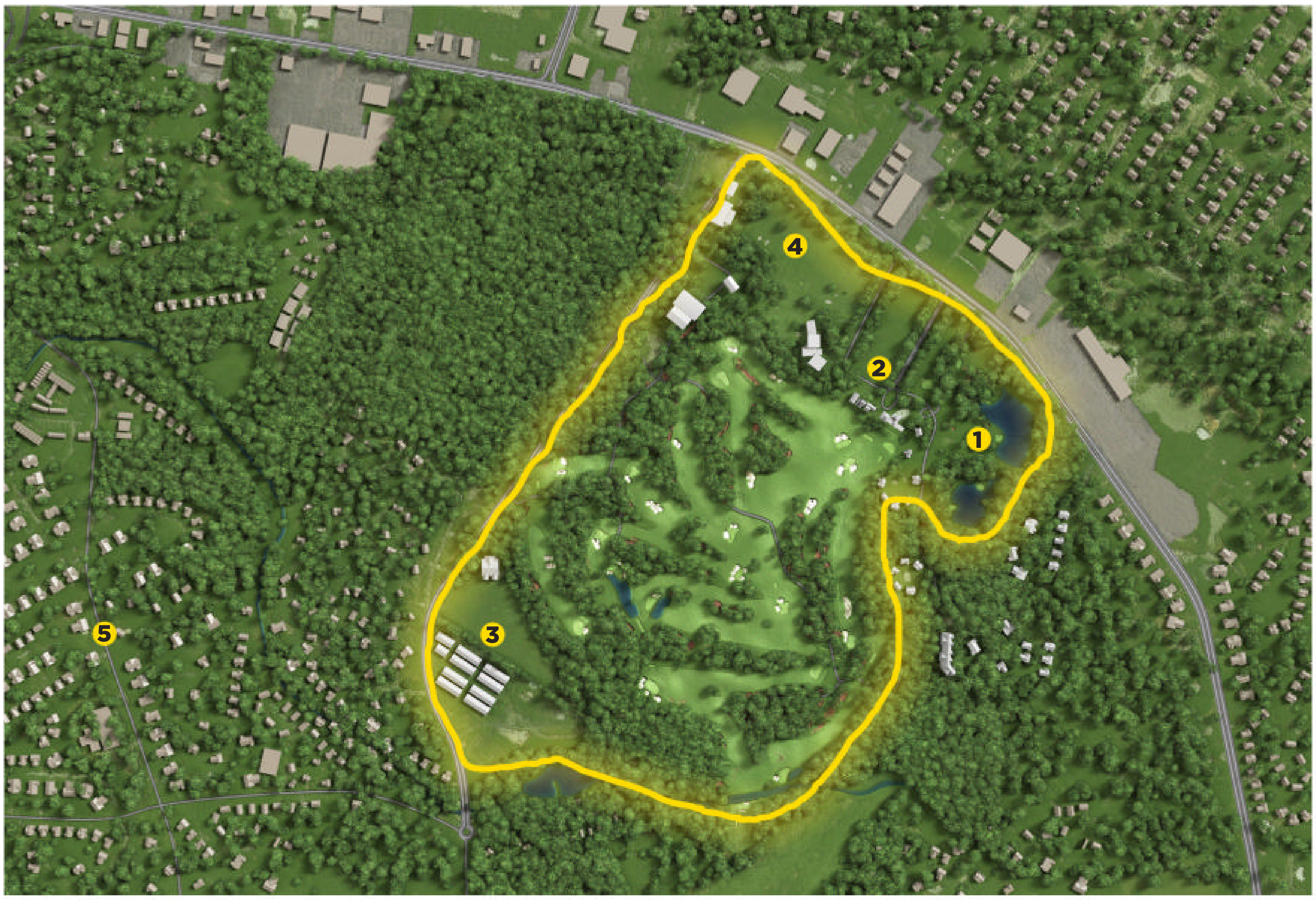
THE EVOLUTION OF AUGUSTA

1942



1. Augusta National was originally a 365-acre nursery called Fruitland. Construction on the course began in 1931, and it opened in 1932. The first Masters was played in 1934.
2. The clubhouse was completed in 1857 and served as the home for a plantation owner.
3. The original practice facility was between the ninth and 18th holes.
4. Magnolia Lane, the 330-yard entrance, was dirt until the late 1940s.
5. The Great Depression derailed ambitious expansion plans, and five members bought the club to rescue it from bankruptcy.

2002

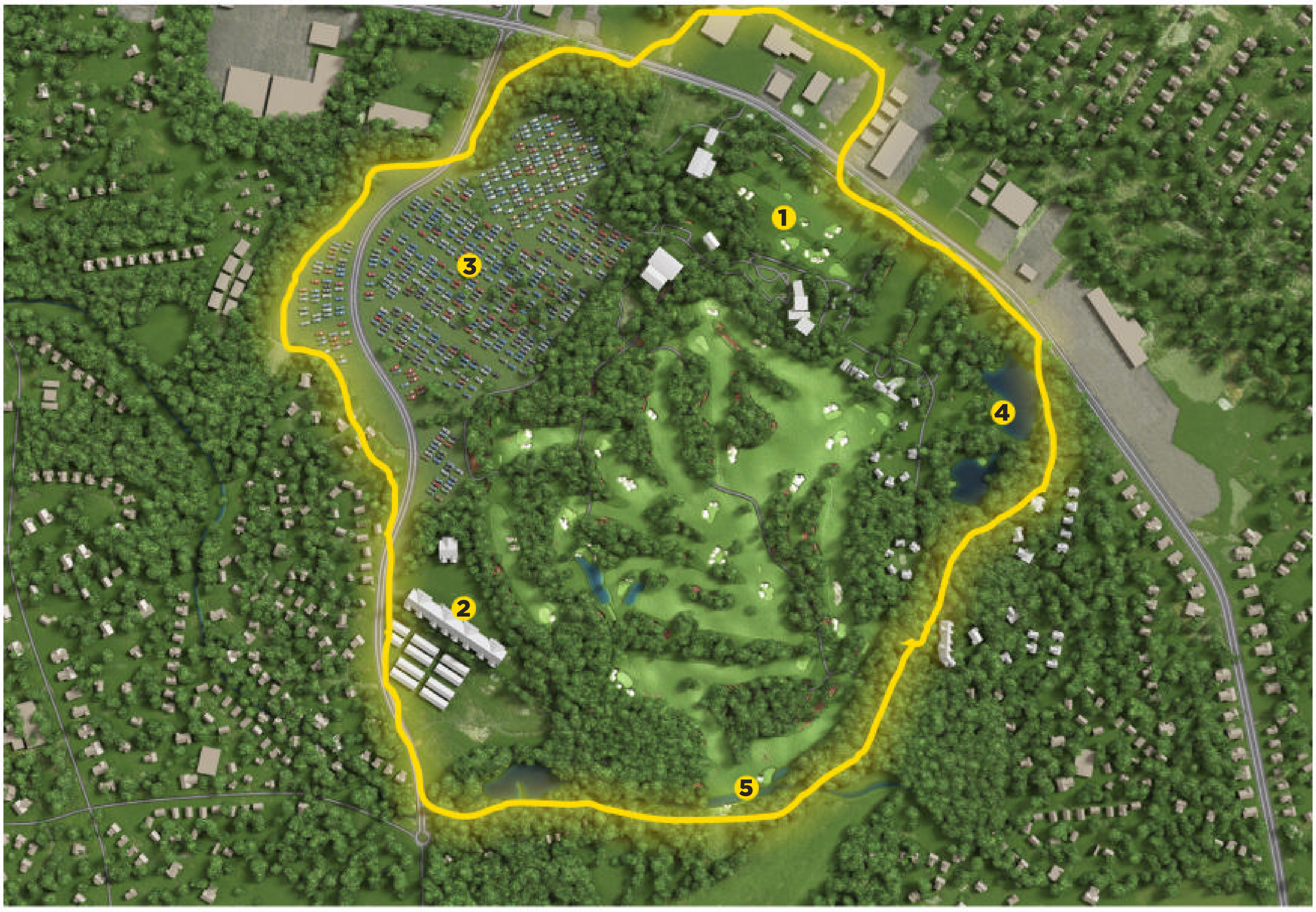


1. The Par-3 Course opened in 1958, and the first Masters Par-3 Contest was played in 1960.
2. The club constructed a proper practice facility in the 1950s to the east of Magnolia Lane.
3. In the 1980s, the club added a patron entrance and parking lot off of Berckmans Road.
4. About the same time period, the club added more parking off Washington and Berckmans and another patron entrance on Berckmans.
5. From the club's founding to the turn of the century, the population of Augusta grew by nearly 135,000 to more than 195,000.

NATIONAL

HOW THE HOME OF THE MASTERS HAS EXPANDED OVER TIME AND WHAT COULD LIE AHEAD

ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHRIS O'RILEY



2023

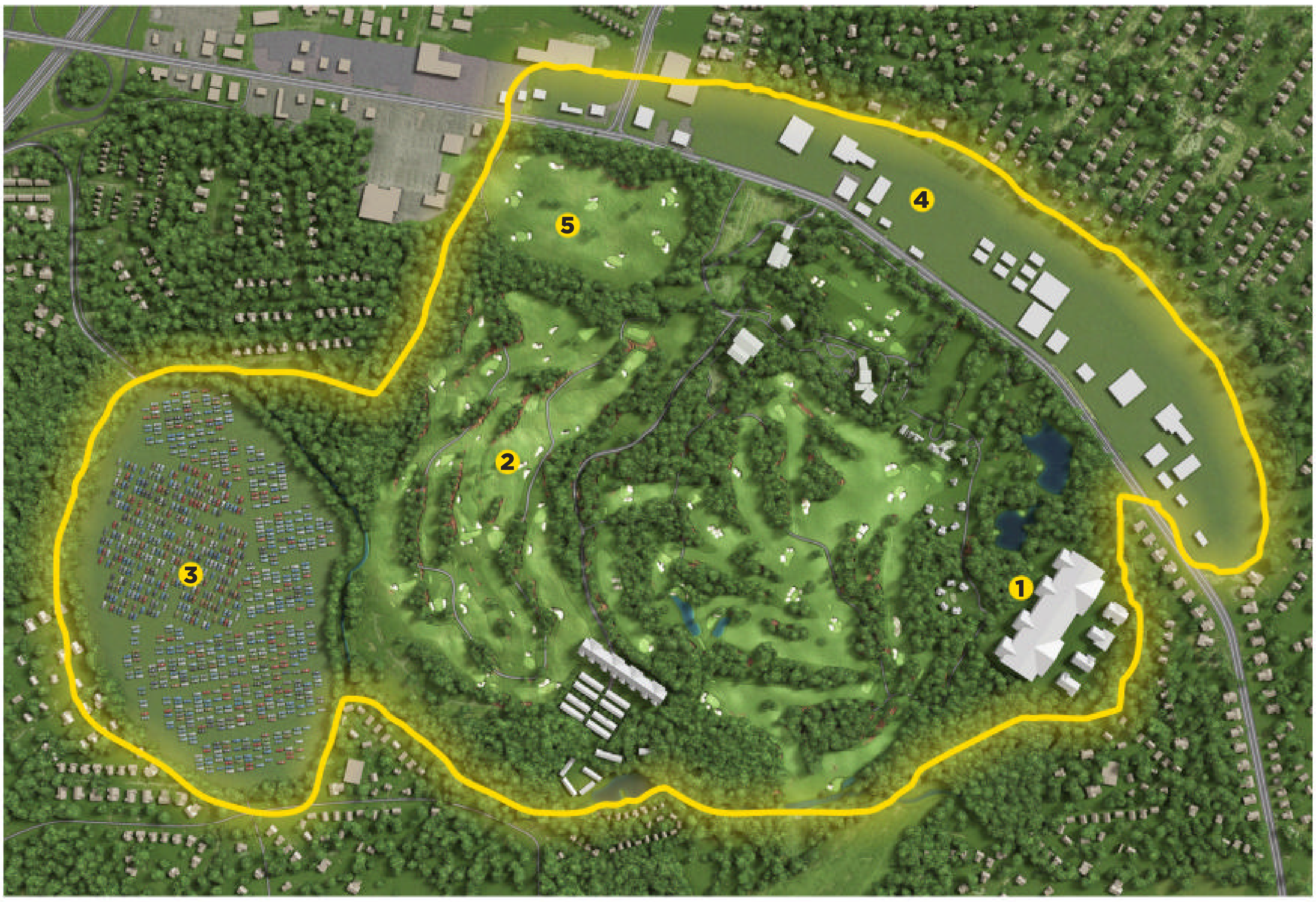
1. In 2010, a new range opened west of Magnolia Lane that is used only for the Masters.

2. Berckmans Place, an ultra-exclusive VIP retreat, opened for members and corporate hospitality in 2012.

3. The club is believed to be 75 percent bigger in acreage than at its founding. An entire neighborhood west of the club was purchased and then converted into parking by 2016.

4. The Par-3 Course was renovated for the 2023 Masters.

5. The club bought land from Augusta Country Club in 2017 to lengthen the 13th hole for 2023.



2043?

1. Housing for all competitors and media for Masters week.

2. A second 18-hole course, perhaps for the Augusta National Women's Amateur, would be a nod to the founders' original wish to have a second course.

3. A new parking lot could be constructed closer to I-20 with an interstate exit that runs into Augusta National property to avoid busy Washington Road.

4. A reimagined fan village could be built to honor the Masters Tournament and the game.

5. A practice area for the potential new course could be added.

on top of their badge entrance, so let's build a new parking lot. The more spots the club owns on Washington Road, the fewer spots that can serve as swap meets. New technology now ensures badge holders caught reselling passes will have future privileges revoked.

Payne brought the club into the 21st century and made the Masters as profitable as ever. “It was hard to argue the club was doing anything wrong in its business ventures because it was making so much money,” a former club employee familiar with Augusta National's finances says. “Payne looked at what was coming in as only a fraction of what was possible.” The revamped and expanded merchandise centers were Payne-led efforts that had immediate financial benefits, with the media deals growing exponentially.

Payne is still highly respected by Augusta National members, but some in the golf industry believed Payne became too visible. This opinion could derive from jealousy, but it existed. “We govern 20 million golfers and 14 national championships,” says a USGA executive. “The PGA of America answers to 30,000 club pros. The tour runs the biggest professional league in the sport. [Payne] had a few hundred members and the Masters. He's a good man and intelligent, but he's coming at the game from a very different viewpoint than the rest of us.”

When it came time for Payne to step down, Fred Ridley was praised as his replacement. Ridley won the 1975 U.S. Amateur and competed in the 1977 Walker Cup but spurned the enchantments of professional golf to go into law. He remains the last U.S. Amateur champion not to turn professional. Ridley's professional background is in commercial real estate, and he also served as USGA president in the mid-2000s. Two-time Masters champion Ben Crenshaw called Ridley the “consummate gentleman,” which is about the highest compliment an Augusta member can receive.

Those with ties to Ridley—at Augusta and during his time with the USGA—say Ridley saw the chairmanship as a custodian role to the game and to the club. “[Being USGA president] is largely ceremonial,” a former USGA executive says. “Ridley actually gave a damn.”

Payne had left the club in good hands, and its plans remained ambitious; Ridley's job was to keep it humming. In terms of the club's position among the five families, Ridley envisioned himself as a supporting character, wanting to help restore the USGA's image after a decade of blunders and provide whatever help he could to new PGA Tour commissioner Jay Monahan, those familiar with Ridley say. “Fred saw the tour, the PGA, the USGA as the groups that play a daily role in the lives of American golfers,” an Augusta National member says. “He wanted the club to do what it could to help, and when it was our week, to deliver the best we can.”

Ridley's accomplishments cannot be downplayed; the Augusta National Women's Amateur was his idea and one of the more radical changes the club had made in its history. He has also been instrumental in the club's community outreach. “This is a national club. Most members have their own hometowns, and Augusta can be forgotten,” one longtime member says. “[Augusta] can be taken for granted. [The townspeople] are good neighbors, and Ridley wants to make sure [the club's] relationship is more than just transactional with the town.” But after a decade of Payne singing the club's praises, Ridley believed it was time to slightly lower the volume. For the first years of his tenure, that's how he proceeded.

Then the pandemic hit. Professional golf was the first major sport in the United States to return to action after the outbreak of COVID-19, with golf's families coming together and working cohesively. Monahan was widely credited for leading the charge, and his will and collaboration were paramount to what the sport achieved. However, as multiple sources with knowledge of those discussions later relayed, it was Ridley who got the other American entities—specifically the USGA and PGA of America—to go along. As one source inside the PGA Tour says, “Jay saw himself as a quarterback. Fred was the team-appointed captain.”

AMONG THE RUMORED AMBITIONS ARE A BANQUET HALL, ON-SITE HOUSING FOR ALL MASTERS COMPETITORS AND MEDIA, A TOURNAMENT-ONLY EXIT OFF I-20 THAT GOES STRAIGHT TO AUGUSTA NATIONAL'S PARKING LOT, A REIMAGINED FAN VILLAGE AND A NEW GOLF COURSE.

Already admired, Ridley became revered and seen as a voice of reason among his peers. His importance grew with the advent of LIV Golf. Some may debate what responsibility lies with the PGA Tour in allowing the Saudi-backed circuit to manifest, but no doubt the PGA Tour is heavily beholden to Augusta National and the Masters to ultimately win this fight. If LIV golfers are allowed to compete in future majors, the tour loses significant leverage to retain players. Though Augusta National is not changing its criteria for 2023, Ridley was blunt when stating his views on LIV. “Regrettably, recent actions have divided men's professional golf by diminishing the virtues of the game and the meaningful legacies of those who built it,” Ridley said in December 2022. Sources close to Augusta National and the PGA Tour say the club is weighing how it will treat LIV players for 2024 and beyond, and the answer could be coming soon. Said Ridley, “As we have said in the past, we look at every aspect of the tournament each year, and any modifications or changes to invitation criteria for future tournaments will be announced in April.”

Ridley may have wanted a supporting role, but his chairmanship is now arguably more important than ever. With that power comes responsibility and possible repercussions. In trying to do what's best for the tournament and for the game, Ridley may have opened the club to scrutiny. Ridley was named in LIV Golf's antitrust lawsuit against the PGA Tour in August 2022. The lawsuit alleges Ridley and the club conspired with the tour against LIV. “For example, in February 2022 Augusta National representatives threatened to disinvite players from the Masters if they joined LIV Golf,” reads one allegation. Another says club officials attended a PGA Tour council meeting and contended that Augusta National was working with the tour to “address” LIV. The claim goes further with this reference to behind-the-scenes work from Ridley: “Augusta National Chairman Fred Ridley personally instructed a number of participants in the 2022 Masters not to play in the LIV Golf Invitational Series.” The law-

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DOES AUGUSTA NATIONAL RUN THE MASTERS OR VICE VERSA? AGGRESSIVE EXPANSION IN INFLUENCE AND PHYSICAL FOOTPRINT HAS TRANSFORMED AUGUSTA NATIONAL INTO A CLUB WHOSE ACTIONS AND DIRECTION MATTER WELL BEYOND FOUR DAYS IN APRIL.

suit also mentions that Phil Mickelson's suspension from the PGA Tour came the day after Mickelson's name was removed from the 2022 Masters field.

Ridley and the club are also part of the Department of Justice's antitrust probe in professional golf. It should be noted Ridley is not the only target; filings by LIV in January 2023 accuse Augusta members Condoleezza Rice and Warren Stephens of attempting to persuade the DOJ not to investigate the club. Three members within the club, along with senior executives at the PGA of America and USGA (who are also subjects of the investigation), insist the matter is more procedural than it is being portrayed in the press. Still, it is happening, and a club that values its privacy doesn't particularly enjoy the optics of a probe.

Those associated with the club insist Ridley has the backing of membership and that Ridley's even temper and gentle touch are needed in this emotional, litigious, existential clash. "The rah-rah guys are good in the movies, not real life," says one member with a considerable voice inside the club. "Fred is not going to grandstand. Fred's too smart to go down that path." However, many Augusta National members are leaders of companies with dealings in Saudi Arabia. They might not personally like what LIV is doing—and abhor LIV turning the coming Masters into a spectacle—but they also have to answer to their businesses and boards. Another view is that professional golf's civil war is a potential opportunity for the Masters to strengthen its importance. "If other [stars] go to LIV, and the tour is firm in its suspensions, [the Masters] and other majors would be one of the only places for men's golf to be united," says a member with ties to another governing body.

EXPANSION AND LIV BATTLES HAVE opened a window into the costs that come with great ambition. Take the lengthening of the 13th. The exact number is not known, but those associated with the club say it spent $20 million to acquire the land from Augusta Country Club. That's $20 million for an extra 40 yards used only four times a year. Changes to the course are made yearly, and most are aren't announced, but changing the most iconic par 5 in golf is different. Some believe the changes were made to restore the hole's integrity. Others believe it's the club's not-so-subtle message to the R&A and USGA that arguably the most famous hole in golf has to be saved because the governing bodies haven't done their job in curbing distance. "You ask different members, you'll get different answers. A shot fired about distance is a recurring answer," one member says. "It will be interesting to see what the official line about it is because people are wondering."

Who gets to enjoy the Masters is another subject of gravity. For years the tournament eschewed the corporate onslaught of premium seats and company suites and other trappings of modern sports entertainment. That mind-set has changed, encapsulated by the opening of the ultra-exclusive Berckmans Place retreat. Like most things Masters related, Berckmans is a unique experience and redefines luxury hospitality, boasting replica putting greens and high-end food-and-beverage offerings.

Despite measures to cut down on secondary markets, badges still wind up on ticket hubs at five-figure prices. "The patrons are the most informed, passionate galleries in golf because we have the most passionate base," a member says. "The more you bring in corporate crowds, the more badges that are turned around and sold for profit, the more that passionate base can get pushed aside. It hasn't yet, but you have to be careful."

Because of unending development some worry change is not just warranted but expected, and those expectations must meet an insanely high standard. That is a recurring concern among members when talks arise of a second course. "It would be the most anticipated course ever. How do you build something that lives up to that?" a source with ties to the club says. Then there's the question of how the course would be used. The de facto response is the course would be for the ANWA, a nod to the founders' aspirations for a women's course at Augusta National before the Great Depression derailed them. However, does the club use a second course to expand its grow-the-game initiatives and—hold your breath—open it for limited public play? If it goes that route, how can it avoid becoming a tourist site, something the club has zero appetite for? "If you do this, you have to do it right," says a former employee with a decade of service. "The problem is that a lot of people have different ideas of what 'right' is."

In the face of these modern challenges a new generation of members wonders how the club can be subservient to the past and adhere to the present. These members see the future changes as a chance to shape history. They hear the reservations about catering to VIPs and ask you to point to another major sporting entity that doesn't. They note what Payne and Ridley have done and believe a sport in which Augusta has a larger role is a sport that's better off.

When one new-ish member is asked why some members have reservations about Augusta's future initiatives, he responds, "The biggest mistake we make is painting those who resist change as stubborn. That's not true," the member says. "Their opinions come from care. They believe they are protecting a vulnerable asset, and without them, the world would carelessly fumble a beautiful thing." Often, he says, what is perceived as bold today will seem logical tomorrow. "If anything, that's what this club is about, trailblazing," he says. "It wouldn't follow the club's pattern of behavior to stop where we're at."

Though some Augusta National members are uneasy with the battles the club must fight, they almost unanimously say they don't see how the club can retreat. Despite a crossover of Augusta membership with the USGA, there is a fear that the governing body is incapable of taking a step forward without stepping on its own feet. The PGA Tour is battling for its existence against an entity that has the means to sustain a fight with no end. A sense of duty has always been instilled when becoming a member at Augusta National. Payne intensified that responsibility, and Ridley has carried it forward. Where the members carry it from here is now the question.

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FOR RENT

Spending six figures on a home in Augusta during Masters week is a tradition unlike any other

By Christopher Powers

Photographs by Andrew Hetherington

When you turn left onto River Ridge Drive off of Washington Road, then make another left onto Brookwood Drive, you'll find yourself in an Augusta, Ga., neighborhood called National Hills. The neighborhood consists mostly of one-level brick homes until you reach the corner of Brookwood and Smith Creek Road, where past a wall of towering pines sits a beautiful, completely renovated home that looks nothing like the others around it. Kathie Williams bought the property in December 2021 and fixed it up with rentals in mind, a nine-month, $250,000 process that will be well worth the wait come April, and the April after that, and the April after that.

"When I tell people where it is, they're like '*Oh,*' " Williams says, "but then they see it and the location."

Williams' property is about half a mile from Augusta National Golf Club, which hosts a certain tournament that welcomes one week of chaos that keeps the town afloat for the other 51.

YOU'VE PROBABLY HEARD BEFORE that some Augusta residents pay off their mortgages with money they get for renting their homes during Masters week, that they all make a run for it when the world's best golfers come to town, bailing for Disney World with the kids or Myrtle Beach or St. Simons Island, that spring break at every school in the area revolves around Masters week, that most of the actual residents can't even be bothered with what is the most well-known golf tournament in the world happening right in their backyard. All of this is true.

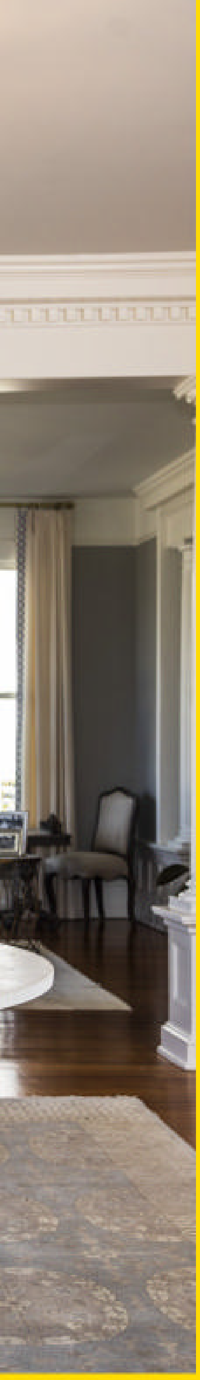
The town doubles in size, and those folks need a place to stay. The Augusta hotel business certainly booms during Masters week, but the town doesn't have enough of them to lodge everybody. The Masters rental-home business is big, one that has existed in some capacity since the mid-1970s, when Augusta National and the Chamber of Commerce got together to figure out how they were going to house all the people interested in coming to watch Bobby Jones' small gathering of friends. It has become a rather large gathering since, to the point where one agency, Jane Fuhrmann's Tournament Housing & Events LLC, has more than 2,000 properties in its system as options for Masters renters.

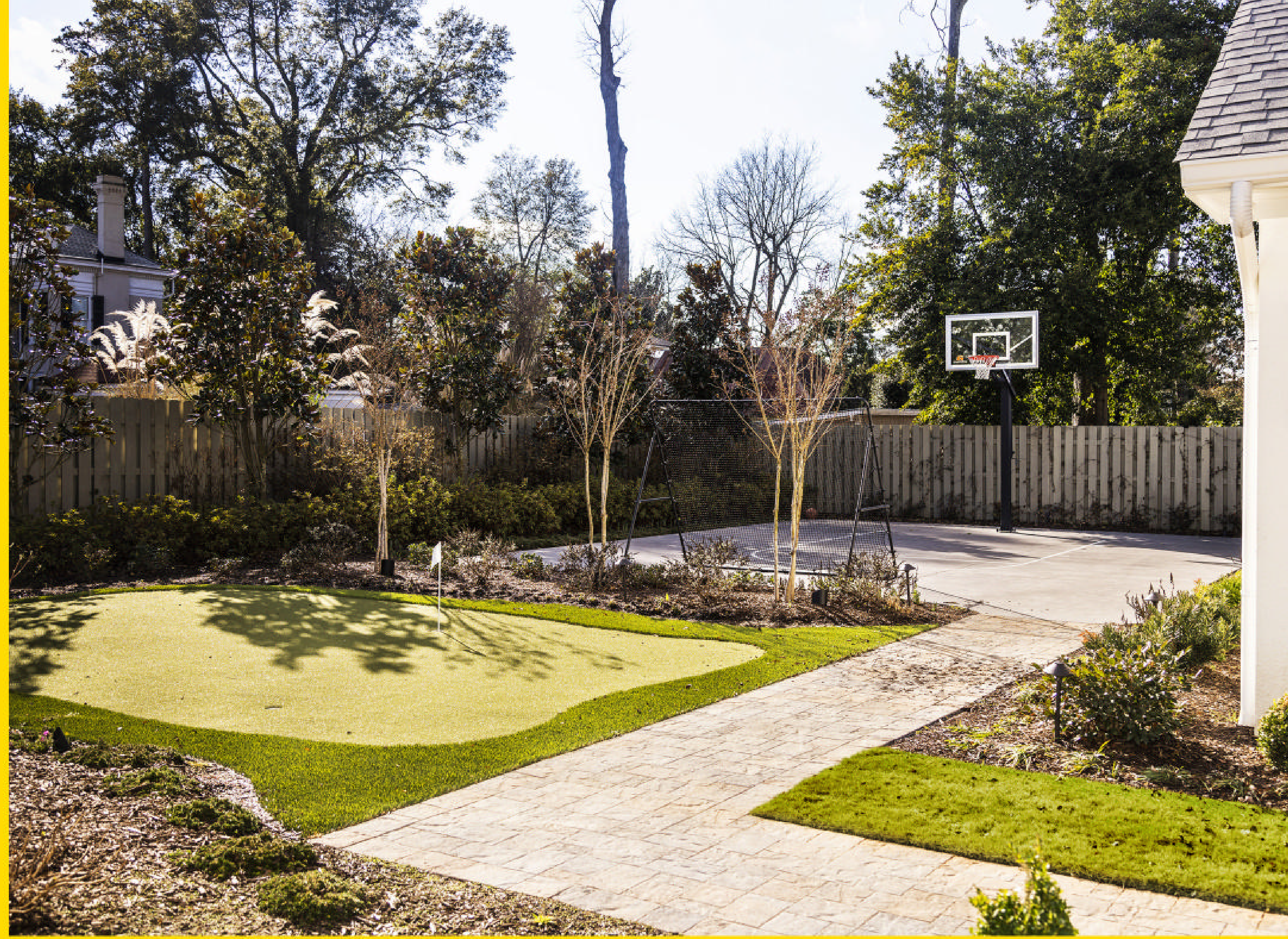
Fuhrmann knows the area and its golf history as well as anyone. The former director of the Masters Housing Bureau began her business in 1998. Fuhrmann works with clients from all over the world, including many of the premier players, their families and support staff, as well as corporate clients who pay big bucks for the best homes. Despite being run strictly for Masters week, it is a full-time business.

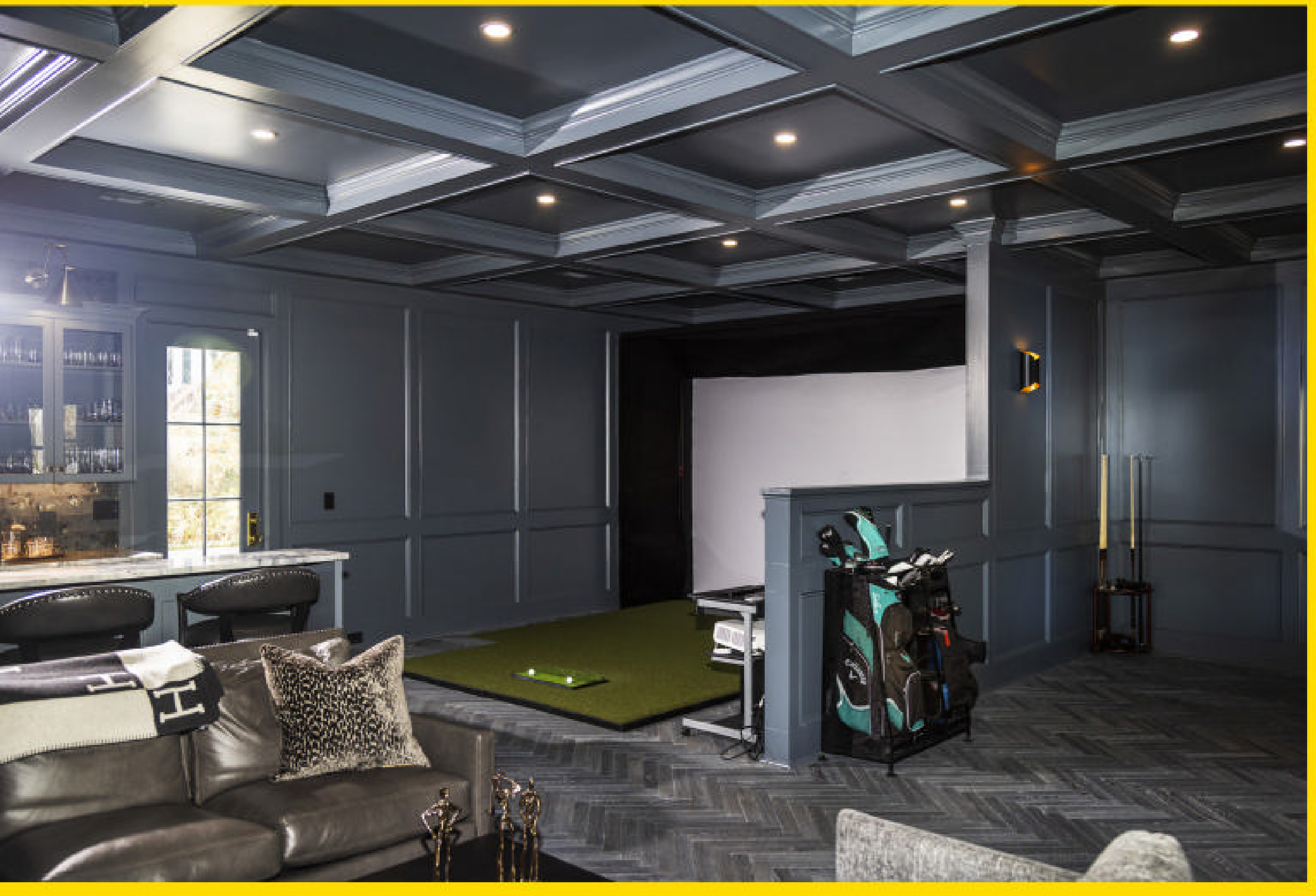
Fuhrmann's service entails much more than just setting up dinner and a car service to get guests to and from the course. She brings in all-new linens for each home, and the owners essentially begin prepping the home in January, including everything from pressure washing to planting new flowers to bringing in pine straw. Once Fuhrmann received a call from a player's agent who notified her that the player's plane was arriving early, and the player was coming with his family. Fuhrmann raced over to the home the player had rented to bring a baby crib, only to find out that the crib didn't fit through the doorway of the baby's room. She went next door and asked a gentleman doing landscaping for another home to help Fuhrmann deconstruct the bed, then re-assembled it in the baby's room just as the player and his family walked through the front door.

Emergencies happen. One year a player locked himself out of a rental home at the end of the tournament. Fuhrmann sent some of her staff over to get him back in so that he could pack and catch his plane, only for his management team to lock themselves out of a different home at the same time, proving Rae's Creek is not the only hazard that needs to be navigated in Augusta. Another year, a South African player had a severe tooth infection, but finding a dentist was proving difficult with all the locals out of town for the week. Fuhrmann knew a dentist who was a family friend, so she picked up the player and told the dentist she had someone that needed some attention (no word if the infection had anything to do with pimento-cheese sandwiches).

Fuhrmann breaks the homes into three categories: "host" homes, "dinner" homes and "sleeper" homes. The host homes, which can go for anywhere between $30,000 and $70,000, is where all the guests convene at night, typically for a corporation, and usually come with Masters badges. Fuhrmann builds the "sleeper" homes around the host home so that guests don't have to schlep all the way across town after an evening of entertainment. It's not out of the realm of possibility that one corporation could rent out three homes in proximity to one another, one used strictly for gathering in the evening (a host home) and the others for resting heads at night (a sleeper home). The dinner homes, which go for signifi-







RENTAL PRICE: SIX FIGURES
The colonial-style home, owned by Darren and Hayley Mack (previous pages and these pages), was built in 1906 and renovated in 2017. The house now boasts a basketball court, putting green, bar and golf simulator.

cantly less than hosts and sleepers, are usually reserved for smaller groups of 10 to 12 guests and receive much less wear and tear.

Players are not averse to renting multiple homes, either. Rory McIlroy normally rents a "family" house and a "staff" house. McIlroy used to rent in the West Lake community, one of the neighborhoods Fuhrmann works with. However, after staying in the same house for seven years, McIlroy needed a different vibe. "All I remembered was walking out of that house disappointed," he says. "I needed to change it up."

A vibe switch, proximity to the course and a huge kitchen for a chef to operate in are all things players consider when looking for a home during Masters week. Fuhrmann says many players used to prefer the historic areas surrounding the golf club, but now players want "new" homes, which are hard to find in those areas. Hayley Mack's home in Summerville blends historic and new together seamlessly, though it's a bit out of the price range for even the most financially well-off players. (Mack will say only that it's six figures for the week.) Mack and her husband, Darren, bought the colonial home, built in 1906, in 2016. They added 3,000 square feet (the home is now 8,000 square feet), a guest house, a basketball court, a putting green and a golf simulator. Unlike Williams, this is the Macks' actual home, which they rent out only one week a year. Every-

> **One billionaire renter brought only his two sons and his chef and asked for nothing but peanut butter and oatmeal—an ideal guest. Another guest, however, made it the party home for the week.**

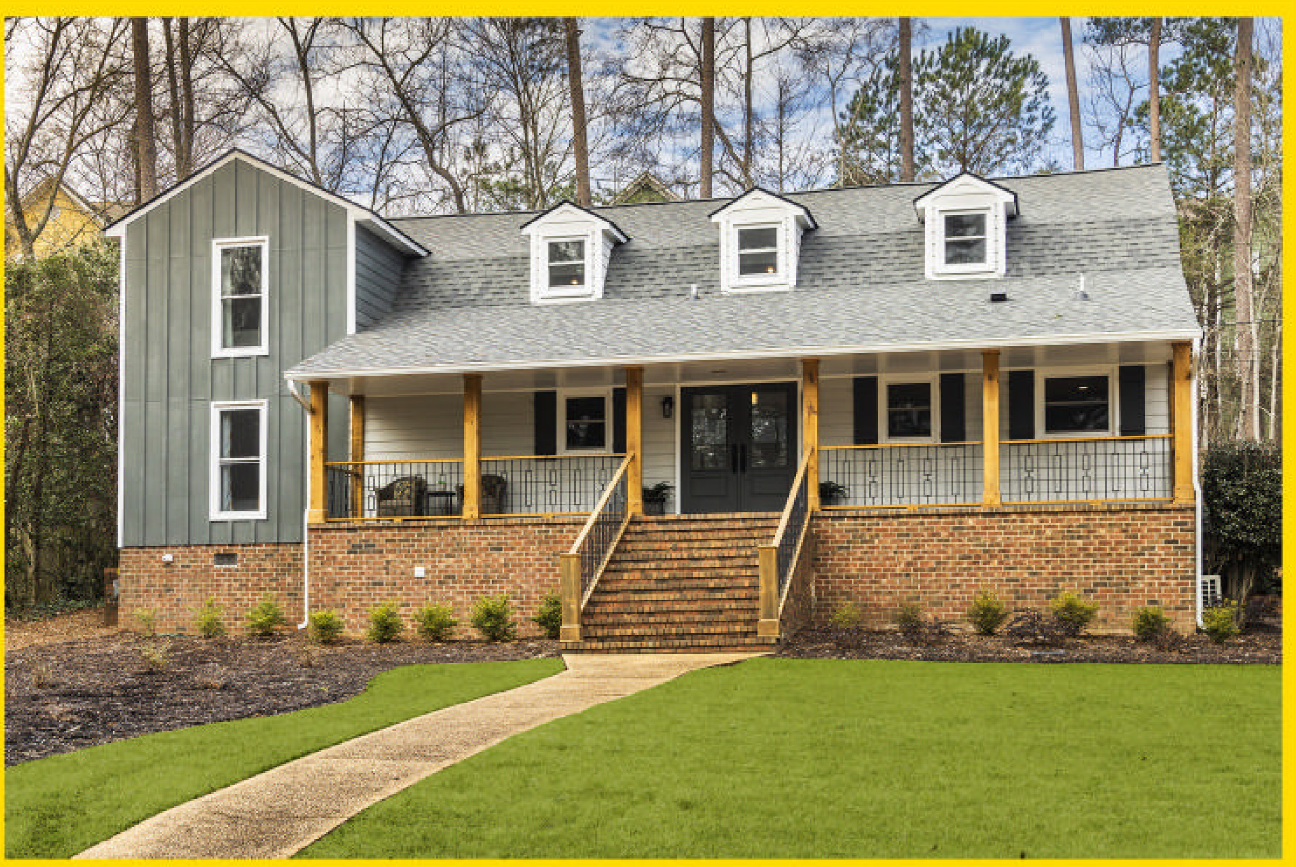
thing you see when you walk inside is custom, from all of the furniture to the wallpaper that was hand-painted in France. "Our goal was to have stuff where nobody could walk in and say 'Hey, I have that,' " Mack says.

That extends to the gourmet kitchen, which required a complete gutting, the master bathroom, the "Kim Kardashian closet" and the stunning outdoor area, which features a custom gunite reflection pool. An indoor-outdoor living room connects to the main house, giving it a very Los Angeles-type feel. The "man cave" has a golf simulator, a lounge area and a full bar that looks less like a man cave and more like a Ralph Lauren Polo Bar, according to Mack.

"There's not a lot of homes in this area that look like ours and rent for Masters," she admits. "We did this because we saw it as an investment for our family. We obviously get a very big number for Masters week."

Mack cannot reveal the identity of her guest because of a non-disclosure agreement, indicating this is serious business. She does say it is a billionaire philanthropist, one who is "not Justin Timberlake famous, but billionaire famous." This is the second different billionaire the Macks have rented to, which makes sense given the price tag. The first renter, worth $6 billion, brought only his two sons and his chef and asked for nothing but peanut butter and oatmeal—an ideal guest. The Macks did, however, have one bad experience before the renovation. A well-known beverage company rented out the home and, as Mack puts it, made it the party home for the week. When Mack returned, her housekeeper greeted her at the door and said, "Don't panic." Mack stood there, cried and thought, *Never again*.

She changed her mind, and now their investment is paying off. The best



RENTAL PRICE: $30,000
Kathie Williams' house is tucked in a modest neighborhood called National Hills, but its proximity to Augusta National makes it an attractive location during the Masters.

Augusta
MASTERS

part, not just for Mack but for all the residents who rent out their homes, is that the rent is tax-free thanks to "The Augusta Rule," which allows homeowners to rent out their homes for up to 14 days a year without needing to report the rental income on their individual tax return. This rule was originally created to protect Augusta residents for Masters week, though it now applies to any taxpayer who owns a home in the United States, provided the home is not a primary place of business.

The Augusta Rule is of great importance for homeowners who, unlike Mack, don't command six-figure sums for their properties. Take Janienne and Garth Brey, for example. They bought a house on the Savannah River for about $300,000, and once the couple is finished renovating the "Riverfront Retreat," as it's referred to on VRBO, they expect to fetch something in the range of $600,000, though in the meantime they gladly rent it throughout the year and during Masters week. This year will be the fourth Masters the Breys rent out the house, and although it's not a Summerville mansion, one can't help but envision kicking back after a glorious day at Augusta National and looking out at the river. The house has four stories with four bedrooms and three baths and a glass sunroom overlooking the water that sits on top of a fully furnished deck. This sunroom is where last year's renters, a CBS news crew, spent the bulk of their time working on a report about Tiger Woods for CBS news.

Interestingly, the Breys didn't even know about the Masters when they bought the place. "During the process, the Realtor told us, 'You know, you can rent out your house for the Masters,' " said Janienne Brey. "We were like . . . 'What?' "

WILLIAMS' FIVE-BEDROOM PALACE is inviting from the street. A long walkway through the soon-to-be perfectly manicured front yard leads to a brick staircase that climbs to the front deck. The front door opens to a first floor that feels like one big room. The state-of-the-art kitchen is situated to the right, and the living room is straight ahead. Sliding glass doors offer a view of the backyard. The outdoor area features a propane fire pit and more than enough room for the type of outdoor activities that always require a beverage in one hand. Should the weather not cooperate, or if guests are just looking for a different place to hang, the upstairs media room, complete with an 80-inch TV, is the relaxation zone.

Williams says she got a verbal agreement from a player this year, though he couldn't yet be locked in for multiple years because he's not sure he will be back in 2024, so we know the mystery man is not a Masters winner. That said, a two-time Masters winner has stayed in the house before, something Williams did not know. The previous owners, the Witt family, and their daughter, Chris, had some stories to share. "We were fortunate," Witt says, before casually breaking the news that Seve Ballesteros had made their home his go-to spot for multiple years in the early 1980s.

Ballesteros would come a week early, along with his manager, his father and sometimes his brothers, for practice. Witt's mother always made sure to prepare a big meal for one of the nights (Louisiana catfish was a huge hit for the Spaniard who grew up in a fishing town), and her father would always make a big breakfast. Ballesteros and the family became friends, but the Spaniard was not shy about asserting himself in their house. Once Witt grabbed the TV remote to put on the NCAA Tournament; March Madness was popular with their family. Ballesteros came in, grabbed the remote from her hand and said, "Golf." Witt's mother told her to find another room to watch the hoops in.

Williams doesn't realize how big of a selling point "the house Seve stayed in" is, but she may not even need to. On VRBO, where I first found Williams' home, it was listed on a normal week for about $2,500. For Masters week, Williams estimates she'll get $30,000. Williams, who has rented out different homes in the past, puts some of the

> **The "Augusta Rule," created in the 1970s, lets homeowners rent out their properties for up to 14 days a year without needing to report the rental income on their individual tax returns.**

money back into the house, then uses the rest to invest or to go on vacation. Hilton Head, Italy and Hawaii have all been checked off. This year, she's thinking about a cruise—anywhere that isn't Augusta on Masters week. "The area is just pandemonium," Williams says.

Steve (Pepsi) Hale knows this, which is why the former caddie for Keegan Bradley decided to buy his own place in town after falling in love with the area after a few trips to the Masters. Hale first experienced the Masters in 2008 when his boss at the time, Johnson Wagner, won the Houston Open and earned a last-minute invitation into the field. Hale bunked with a few caddie buddies who were renting a townhouse from a grandmother. The townhouse was one of 12 units that are right behind The Fresh Market, and over the years it had become the caddie house.

In 2016, one of the units went up for sale, and Hale made an offer that was accepted. Two weeks later, Bradley fired him. Hale bought the unit anyway. Now on the bag of Richy Werenski, Hale has not worked the Masters since, and he's beginning to think that if he wants to get back inside the gates, he should sell the townhouse to reverse the bad mojo. For now, he treats the place like a 1957 Chevy, going back and forth for weeks at a time to do work on the house. "I patch some drywall, throw another layer of paint on, replace a sink, whatever," he says. "I enjoy going there for a week."

He uses the place to take care of his fellow caddies when they come for the tournament. Hale has full-time renters, too, and they usually vacate the premises for anywhere between seven and 10 days on Masters week. He gives them a month of free rent for their troubles. Hale's original intention was to be back every year, and it still is. In the meantime he's perfectly fine with the extra income, and if and when he no longer has a full-time job on tour, he has dreams of living in Augusta for a season or two and looping at the golf club.

"I've already had a couple of those preliminary conversations and approvals," he says. "In a perfect world, yeah, I would go there for a few years, tell a story if I'm allowed to and take care of the place."

Taking care of the place is something all residents of Augusta take seriously for 51 weeks out of the year in preparation for a tournament many of them likely never even see in person. Then, for one week, they gladly leave and welcome visitors who would otherwise never drop in on this golf mecca. All the homeowners ask for, outside of big-time money, is that the guests take care of the place, too. Ⓖ

it is well with my
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Welcome
HAPPY
PLACE

if we are not home...
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SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY
Like many Augusta homeowners, Kathie Williams and Janienne Brey like to put up special decorations for their guests during Masters week.

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THIS IS AWKWARD

WHAT YOU CAN LEARN FROM HOW THE PROS PLAY THESE SHOTS AT AUGUSTA

BY DAVID LEADBETTER

WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT AUGUSTA NATIONAL IS TRUE—TELEVISION DOESN'T DO THE PROPERTY JUSTICE. I'M NOT JUST TALKING ABOUT THE BEAUTY OF THE PLACE; I ALSO MEAN THE TERRAIN. IF YOU'VE NEVER BEEN THERE, YOU CAN'T TRULY APPRECIATE HOW HILLY AND UNDULATING THE GOLF COURSE IS. EVEN IN THE FAIRWAY YOU CAN FIND YOUR BALL IN A TOUGH LIE! • MOST WEEKEND GOLFERS DON'T PRACTICE ON ANYTHING BUT FLAT, STABLE SURFACES, SO WATCHING THE MASTERS IS A GOOD TIME TO REVISIT THE FUNDAMENTALS OF HOW TO PLAY FROM VARIOUS AWKWARD LIES. STARTING WITH THAT GREAT PHOTO OF TIGER WOODS HITTING FROM THE PINE STRAW AT THE BEGINNING OF THIS ARTICLE, LET'S LOOK AT SOME OF THE GAME'S BEST PLAYERS FROM LAST YEAR'S MASTERS AND BREAK DOWN HOW THEY PLAYED SHOTS FROM THESE DIFFICULT POSITIONS. REMEMBER THE KEY POINTS, AND THESE SHOTS WON'T SEEM SO UNNERVING THE NEXT TIME YOU ENCOUNTER THEM.

—**DAVID LEADBETTER** WITH RON KASPRISKE

UNSTABLE-GROUND LIE: DIG IN, STAY QUIET

← Tiger can make any trouble shot look easy, so his play from the pine straw on the fifth hole probably wasn't as tough as playing from a similar lie might be for you. The first thing is to note that it's kind of like playing off of pick-up sticks. If you get too close, the pine straw you move could force more pine straw to move and possibly the ball. Remember to approach with caution.

Whenever you're playing off an unstable surface—not just pine straw—set up with your feet feeling "dug in." Pine straw is slippery, so get your balance from the start. A wider stance helps, too. When you swing, keep your footwork to a minimum to ensure good contact. This is not a place where you want to go 100 percent. Back down your effort. Tiger even gripped down on his iron for better control.

Although unrelated to playing in pine straw, this "hold off" look that Tiger has at the end of his swing shows he was trying to shape the ball left to right. What that should tell you is that it's possible to curve a shot from this lie and possibly knock it on the green. But your priority should be getting the ball back in play. Advance it and take your chance at an up-and-down save.

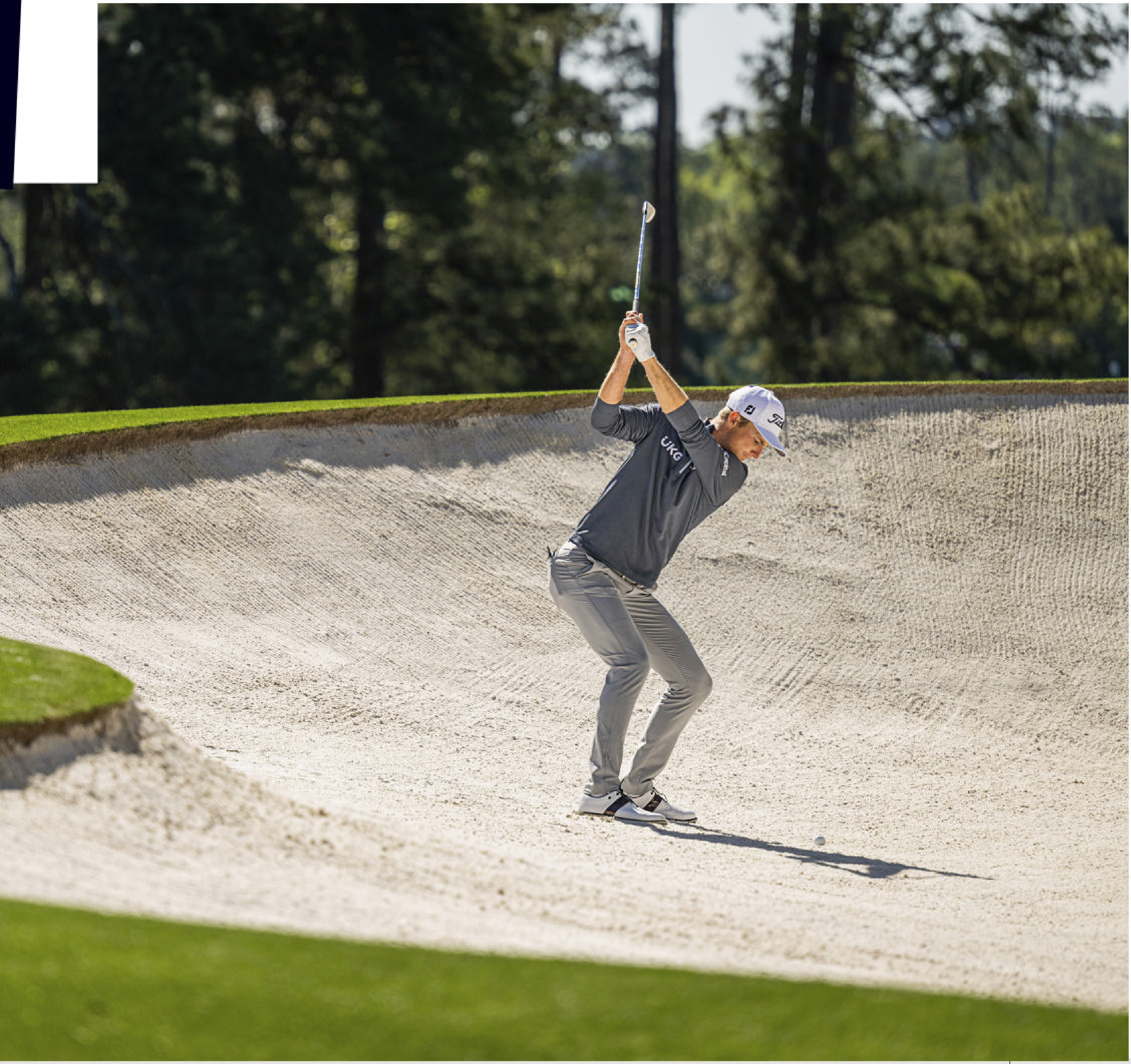
WOODS (PREVIOUS PAGE), ZALATORIS BY J.D. CUBAN

SIDEHILL BUNKER LIE: KEEP THE FLEX IN YOUR KNEES

Will Zalatoris knocked his tee shot into this massive bunker on the par-5 second hole and found himself having to play from a tough lie (*below*). Just like when you have a downhill-sidehill lie on firm turf, this is one of the most challenging scenarios for amateurs to get good contact.

With any uneven lie, you've got to set your body so it matches the angle of the slope. In this instance, Will likely set up feeling more weight on his left side with his left shoulder lower than it normally would be at address. A downslope shot is hard enough, but the addition of sideslope means the ball is below your feet. To make sure gravity doesn't pull you in the direction of the ball, it's smart to stand a little wider and add more knee flex like you see Will doing here.

The last thing to remember is that you can't lose that exaggerated flex when you swing. What happens is that players come out of this stance fairly often as they swing down, usually thinking they need to help the ball over the lip. That's a mistake. If you keep your angles and finish in a somewhat restricted follow-through, you'll give yourself the best chance of a good strike.



DOWNHILL-SIDEHILL LIE: CHASE AFTER THE BALL

Unlike the downhill-sidehill lie Will Zalatoris had, Cam Smith's lie on the ninth fairway poses a different kind of issue at setup. Namely, you can't dig in with your feet to make sure you keep your balance when you swing. You have to stand a little wider for better stability. Another setup key is to feel like you're a little lower to the ground, almost like you're about to sit down on a stool. Keep that "low" feeling when you swing.

This uneven lie is going to encourage you to swing down on a steeper angle than normal, which is why I often use it as an effective teaching aid for players who have a backswing that's too flat. When you do swing down on more of an upright angle, be sure to marry that with this great swing thought: *Chase the ball down the hill with the clubhead.* Hitting down the slope is going to produce the best result, even to the point where you could actually walk down the fairway after the shot. One more thing to remember: The ball will tend to fly lower and move left to right for righties and right to left for lefties, so adjust your aim and club selection.

SMITH BY J.D. CUBAN

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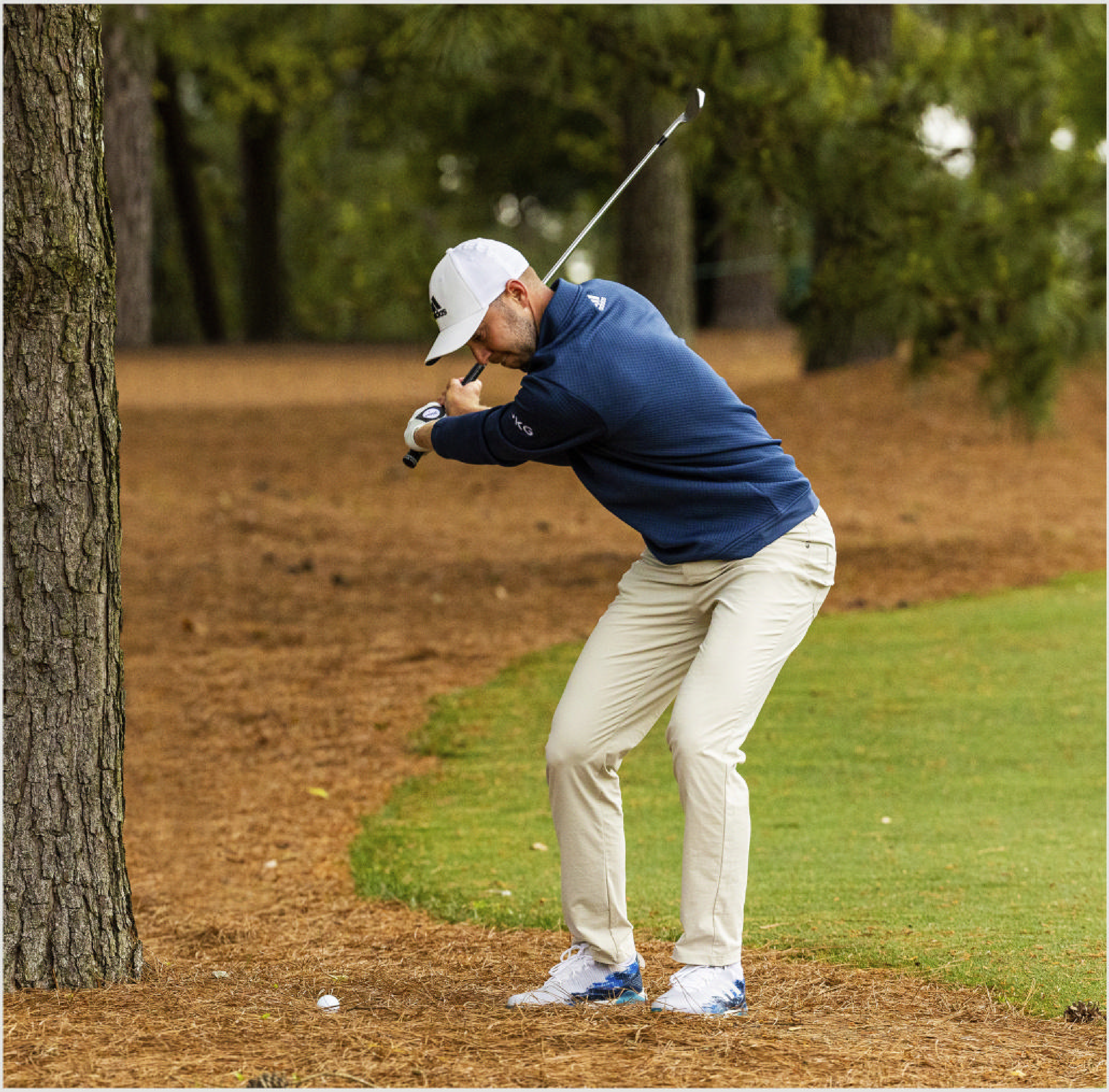
ABBREVIATED-SWING LIE: STRIP DOWN YOUR ACTION

Whenever a tree or some other immovable object is too close and you fear you might strike it, it's going to have a psychological effect on how you play the ball. It looks like Daniel Berger had enough clearance from this tree off the ninth hole to make somewhat of a normal swing, but a lefty wouldn't have been as fortunate.

When facing a lie where you have to manufacture some sort of abbreviated swing to advance the ball, or the lie is suspect as it is here for Daniel, you've got to strip down your swing to ensure you hit the ball solidly. Footwork is the first thing to adjust: Your lower body should feel like it's relatively quiet throughout the swing, like you're flat-footed. You also can see that Daniel has gripped down on the club quite a bit. That's also an adjustment for more control.

Other things to consider are to take an extra club and swing at less-than-full pace. Again, all of this is to make sure you hit it as cleanly as you can. Daniel appears to be making a steep downswing into the ball, and he's playing it farther back in his stance than normal. Both of those adjustments will help you get ball-first contact—anything less than that and the shot will go nowhere.



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IN-JAIL LIE: AIM SMALL

↘ There's a lot going on in this photo of Rory McIlroy trying to knock it down toward the second green with a fairway wood (*below*). What I want to focus on is the escape aspect of his play. You've likely encountered opportunities where not only can you get the ball back in play, you also can pick up some yardage. It comes with a catch, however. You've got to put the ball through a "window," and if you miss that opening, you're probably playing your next shot from a worse spot than you're currently in.

So how do the pros make these thread-the-needle shots look so easy? For starters, their swing thought isn't, *Don't hit the tree*. Players like Rory are very conscious of their shot's starting point. They see it beforehand and commit to making it happen.

The mistake you might make is to try to guide the ball through the opening. You have to instead select a very small window, and then make a full swing that isn't steery in appearance. Don't look up too quick. Finish the swing. One more thought: Try picturing a bull's eye between the obstacles in front of you and put all your focus on it, not where you *don't* want the ball to go.

OFF-BALANCE CHIPPING LIE: SIMULATE IT FIRST

→ Around the greens you sometimes have to make adjustments to your stance and swing to get the ball on the putting surface. That was nearly the case for Jordan Spieth on the par-5 15th when he had to play from a steep bank next to the hole's famous pond (*right*). Jordan was lucky that he didn't have to stand with his right foot way lower than his left, but it's worth discussing what to do when one foot is dramatically higher than the other.

Getting your feet in a position where you feel balanced is important, but so is trying to simulate the shot you're about to hit. Experiment with different stances, trying to identify the one that feels most comfortable. When you have it, step away from the ball, find a spot where you can closely recreate the scenario, then make practice swings to get a feel for the shot. Now step back in and hit the shot with this newfound familiarity. Jordan's not trying to do anything fancy here; nor should you. Take your chances that your putter can bail you out rather than going for the hero short-game shot.

MCILROY, SPIETH BY J.D. CUBAN / SCHEFFLER BY BEN WALTON

UPHILL-SIDEHILL FAIRWAY LIE: CLUB UP AND GRIP DOWN

If you love watching the Masters, you're more than familiar with the lie Scottie Scheffler has on the dogleg-left, par-5 13th (*above*). When the ball is above your feet, the first thing to consider is your aim. You will likely draw or hook the ball from this lie, so righties should aim right of where they want the ball to end up and lefties should aim left.

When the ball is above your feet at address, it's wise to grip down on your club some or you risk hitting it fat. Also, take an extra club because the terrain is going to produce a higher, softer shot than if you were standing on flat turf. The other setup adjustment is to make sure your body is perpendicular to the upslope. When you swing, keep in mind that it will be difficult to shift your weight toward the target. You'll feel like you're favoring your back foot, so an abbreviated motion will help you avoid swaying off the ball.

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GOLF DIGEST 50

MAD MONEY

LIV GOLF'S $800-MILLION SPENDING SPREE SHAKES UP OUR RANKING OF THE GAME'S HIGHEST EARNERS

BY MATTHEW RUDY

ILLUSTRATION BY
RYAN JOHSON

The $800 million of opaque spending into men's professional golf by a secretive regime has transformed the Golf Digest 50—our periodic look at the game's highest earners—and made the data behind the rankings harder to parse. It has always been a scavenger hunt to back-channel accurate estimates for things like how much a player such as Rory McIlroy or Jon Rahm receives for a logo on his sleeve or the headcover on his driver—or how much a player like LPGA Tour star Minjee Lee is worth in the market compared to Collin Morikawa, both 26 and two-time major champions.

Regardless of whether Phil Mickelson collected half or a third of his estimated $210-million LIV Golf "player participation agreement" fee in 2022, the impact on the financial structure of professional golf has been profound. Take something as ubiquitous as the contract between player and agent, or the relationship between a player and a main sponsor. The parameters of these deals have been relatively consistent for the past 30 years: Agents collected approximately 20 percent on any off-course deals for logos, equipment or clothing and nothing for what a player made on the course. Off the course, a player's star power—and ability to move merchandise—coincided with endorsement earnings.

However, what happens when a league makes direct payments, as LIV did for a cavalcade of players like Mickelson, Dustin Johnson, Cam Smith, Brooks Koepka, Sergio Garcia, Ian Poulter, Henrik Stenson and Bryson DeChambeau? What happens when the economics of funding the ultimate cash-burning startup turns pro golf's payroll on its head? Golf Digest spoke with multiple agents representing players on every major professional tour, both on the record and off, to better understand this most peculiar year.

For the players who went to LIV, the prospect of big up-front money was obviously an enticement, but even players who cashed enormous checks had deceptively complex decisions to make.

"We've seen players lose shirt, hat and club deals, which doesn't mean as much when you're getting from LIV what Bryson DeChambeau is," says one agent. Players are re-evaluating the sponsor and one-off days where the biggest stars can make a minimum of $100,000 by playing golf with corporate clients, shaking hands at meet-and-greets or hitting balls at clinics. "Why give up the time and subject yourself to that travel?" adds the agent. "But when you net it out for taxes and sort out what it could potentially do to you when it comes to your corporate relationships, you're taking, say, $100 million, and could be leaving $10 or $12 million on the table for the next 10 years. You don't know if LIV is going to be a thing in two years, so what does that math look like? It's all a guess at this point."

Even though the Public Investment Fund (PIF)—Saudi Arabia's $700-billion sovereign wealth entity—could bankroll LIV Golf forever if it wanted, many of the risks are the same as those faced by any early-stage startup employee. "LIV is still very new and generating very little revenue—but that isn't currently an issue because of the deep pockets of the PIF," says Daniel Harraghy, a sports-business analyst from Ampere Analysis, a London-based consulting firm. "If it's no longer seen as a worthwhile investment, players run the risk of committing to a failing enterprise while burning bridges with the PGA Tour."

The salary band that unquestionably came out a winner was the fading tour semi-hero. The Golf Digest 50 is studded with players who were staples

GOLF SAUDI
DON'T BL
LIV GOLF

Eugenio Lopez-Chacarra, No. 44 on our money list, went straight from Oklahoma State to LIV and won in his fifth start.

of the last era of televised golf before high definition. A player entering the twilight stage of his regular tour career essentially is getting pre-paid for that descent path—and insurance against poor performance or injury. Pat Perez, Charles Howell and Kevin Na combined for 11 wins and $110 million in career PGA Tour prize money. They could make that much in two seasons on LIV. Perez never finished higher than 16th in 2022 and still earned $8 million in LIV prize money, thanks to his team's performance. Na shot over par in three events and withdrew from another and made $2 million.

Richard Bland won for the first time on the European Tour at age 48, in 2021. He took the LIV money and was unabashed about why. "Most of my career is behind me in regard to playing at the very highest level," he said. "I have an opportunity to play these events and secure my future, and I'd be pretty foolish to turn that down."

Players like Sergio Garcia, Lee Westwood, Graeme McDowell and deposed Ryder Cup captain Henrik Stenson almost certainly did the same calculations. "Take DJ. He's 38. What tends to happen after that age? It's not great. Every downswing is like a car wreck now," says one agent, referring to the potentially career-shortening speed and violence of the modern power game. "What if you were his agent? What would you say?"

Even the math for the deals a player makes with his team—agent, caddie, coach and trainer—has changed. The agent's cut of one of those large LIV pre-payments? "I've heard everything from players paying the full 20 percent to paying something in the middle to paying nothing at all," says one agent, who has represented multiple major champions. "Those negotiations are complex, and they have tremendous ramifications on what happens to a player in the coming years. It would be hard to argue that a player's representative isn't entitled to a share of that income. No matter what, whatever new agreement gets signed is going to have to be much more specific about how things are allocated."

LIV's investment has had a domino effect on the PGA Tour, which increased its prize money by $150 million for 2023 and reduced the number of fully exempt players from 125 to 70.

CHARLES LEBERGE/LIV GOLF VIA GETTY IMAGES

GOLF DIGEST 50

To compile the latest edition of this list—which covers the calendar year 2022—we combined information from official sources, previously reported information, data from aggregators like Spotrac and estimates from dozens of players, agents and industry insiders.

On-course income includes prize money earned on the PGA Tour and DP World Tour, LIV Golf, LPGA Tour, PGA Tour Champions and other pro tours. Off-course income includes estimates of money earned from sponsors, performance and licensing fees, appearance fees and profits from business ventures. Bonus money includes in-season and season-ending performance money (e.g., FedEx Cup, Aon Risk Reward, Comcast Business Tour Top Ten), Player Impact Program awards for 2022 and sign-on payments for players who joined LIV in 2022. LIV bonuses are estimates pro-rated for the estimated or reported length of a player's contract and have been treated as if that money is not offset by prize money earned in tournaments. Money paid into a deferred compensation program is not included.

We elected not to include former players who did not earn on-course money in 2022, like Jack Nicklaus and Greg Norman. Nicklaus made an estimated $35 million in licensing, architecture and appearance earnings, and Norman's salary from LIV has been reported to be $50 million. Arnold Palmer died in 2016, but his licensing and real estate businesses still generate more than $20 million a year. We also didn't include potentially lucrative investments in ventures like Tiger Woods' and Rory McIlroy's TMRW Sports—which hasn't produced revenue yet—and Justin Thomas' and McIlroy's investment in fitness tracker Whoop. Those moves reinforce the adage that you can get only so rich being an employee. The real money comes from being an owner.

Name	On-Course	Bonus	Off-Course	Total
1. Phil Mickelson	$1,940,000	$75,000,000	$26,000,000	$102,940,000
2. Dustin Johnson	$37,200,000	$50,000,000	$12,000,000	$99,200,000
3. Tiger Woods	$43,500	$15,000,000	$82,000,000	$97,043,500
4. Rory McIlroy	$12,600,000	$31,700,000	$44,000,000	$88,300,000
5. Cameron Smith	$18,900,000	$53,640,000	$6,000,000	$78,540,000
6. Brooks Koepka	$9,600,000	$50,000,000	$15,000,000	$74,600,000
7. Bryson DeChambeau	$4,020,000	$50,000,000	$14,000,000	$68,020,000
8. Sergio Garcia	$7,137,000	$40,000,000	$10,000,000	$57,137,000
9. Jordan Spieth	$5,000,000	$9,325,000	$30,000,000	$44,325,000
10. Scottie Scheffler	$14,000,000	$15,250,000	$12,000,000	$41,250,000

Name	On-Course	Bonus	Off-Course	Total
11. Patrick Reed	$13,480,000	$20,000,000	$5,000,000	$38,480,000
12. Branden Grace	$17,424,000	$15,000,000	$3,000,000	$35,424,000
13. Bubba Watson	$1,225,000	$28,000,000	$5,000,000	$34,225,000
14. Joaquin Niemann	$9,600,000	$20,925,000	$3,000,000	$33,525,000
15. Lee Westwood	$4,920,300	$25,000,000	$3,000,000	$32,920,300
16. Ian Poulter	$3,833,000	$25,000,000	$4,000,000	$32,833,000
17. Justin Thomas	$6,800,000	$11,450,000	$13,000,000	$31,250,000
18. Paul Casey	$6,200,000	$20,000,000	$4,000,000	$30,200,000
19. Henrik Stenson	$6,094,000	$20,000,000	$4,000,000	$30,094,000
20. Jon Rahm	$10,648,220	$6,715,000	$11,000,000	$28,363,220
T-21. Xander Schauffele	$7,400,000	$11,200,000	$8,000,000	$26,600,000
T-21. Abraham Ancer	$6,600,000	$15,000,000	$5,000,000	$26,600,000
23. Hideki Matsuyama	$4,600,000	$925,000	$20,000,000	$25,525,000
24. Matthew Wolff	$5,700,000	$15,000,000	$4,000,000	$24,700,000
25. Talor Gooch	$12,310,000	$10,000,000	$2,000,000	$24,310,000
26. Harold Varner III	$4,800,000	$15,000,000	$4,000,000	$23,800,000
27. Collin Morikawa	$4,800,000	$3,600,000	$15,000,000	$23,400,000
28. Marc Leishman	$4,915,000	$15,000,000	$3,000,000	$22,915,000
29. Charl Schwartzel	$8,873,000	$10,000,000	$3,000,000	$21,873,000
30. Pat Perez	$9,100,000	$10,000,000	$2,500,000	$21,600,000

That means the players at the top of the rankings will be making a lot more money on the course and off, in the form of endorsements and bonuses like the PGA Tour's Player Impact Program. With all the different income streams (and their changing volumes) it's likely that representation deals will fundamentally change.

One possible scenario involves golf contracts that look more like those in baseball or basketball, where agents collect a smaller, set percentage on all player revenue. Those same conversations are happening with caddies and coaches, who have traditionally collected a percentage of a player's on-course earnings in addition to a stipend to cover expenses. In a world where Johnson made $37.2 million on course, Cameron Smith made $18.9 million and Scottie Scheffler $14 million, there has never been a better time to be a top-level caddie or coach.

As much money as the top players have collected, they aren't in new tax brackets. Recent college stars Eugenio Lopez-Chacarra and James Piot very much are. Both looked at the prospect of navigating the PGA Tour's paths toward membership—the season-long PGA Tour University program for college players or Korn Ferry Q school—and decided to take LIV's money and instant promotion to the big leagues.

Lopez-Chacarra was an All-American at Oklahoma State and ranked as high as second in the World Amateur Golf Rankings. Piot was a less-heralded prospect but still earned all-conference honors at Michigan State and was the surprise winner of the 2021 U.S. Amateur. Lopez-Chacarra won his fifth start on LIV, in Bangkok, and earned $6.9 million in prize money for the year in only seven starts. Piot went from having no status on any tour to collecting $2 million on course in eight LIV events. Justin Suh led the Korn Ferry Tour in prize money in 2022 with $500,000. He played 24 events, won once and had 10 top-10 finishes. Which is better? That depends on how one defines "better." Lopez-Chacarra and Piot teed it up with former major champions and secured financial stability. Suh got far more reps, felt more pressure, financial and otherwise, and is arguably better prepared for the long haul of competitive golf.

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GOLF DIGEST 50

Name	On-Course	Bonus	Off-Course	Total
31. Jason Kokrak	$6,700,000	$10,000,000	$4,000,000	$20,700,000
32. Matthew Fitzpatrick	$8,500,000	$5,715,000	$6,000,000	$20,215,000
33. Patrick Cantlay	$9,400,000	$5,750,000	$5,000,000	$20,150,000
34. Peter Uihlein	$12,925,000	$5,000,000	$1,000,000	$18,925,000
35. Tony Finau	$6,100,000	$7,650,000	$5,000,000	$18,750,000
36. Viktor Hovland	$7,000,000	$3,715,000	$8,000,000	$18,715,000
37. Max Homa	$5,300,000	$5,750,000	$7,000,000	$18,050,000
38. Rickie Fowler	$1,022,000	$2,000,000	$15,000,000	$18,022,000
39. Will Zalatoris	$9,400,000	$5,500,000	$3,000,000	$17,900,000
40. Sungjae Im	$5,600,000	$6,750,000	$5,000,000	$17,350,000
41. Sam Burns	$7,100,000	$5,000,000	$4,000,000	$16,100,000
42. Jason Day	$1,600,000	$2,000,000	$12,000,000	$15,600,000
43. Richard Bland	$7,850,000	$5,000,000	$2,000,000	$14,850,000
44. Eugenio Lopez-Chacarra	$6,900,000	$5,000,000	$2,000,000	$13,900,000
45. Billy Horschel	$5,000,000	$3,600,000	$5,000,000	$13,600,000
46. Carlos Ortiz	$6,400,000	$5,000,000	$2,000,000	$13,400,000
47. Cameron Young	$6,500,000	$3,760,000	$3,000,000	$13,260,000
48. Minjee Lee	$3,900,000	$1,000,000	$5,500,000	$10,400,000
49. Tom Kim	$5,100,000	$0	$5,000,000	$10,100,000
50. Lydia Ko	$4,360,000	$0	$4,500,000	$8,860,000

To say that the path to a lucrative career in professional golf is fundamentally disrupted would be an understatement. The PGA Tour is scrambling to provide a consistent pathway for young stars to get starts in main events while changing the complexion of fields by stratifying some events as "designated" and making them for top-ranked players only. "Five years ago, the first call you'd make after signing a player would be to secure ball, club or clothing money," says one agent, who has represented multiple first-team All-Americans. "Now, the first calls go to LIV and the PGA Tour. What will LIV pay? Will the PGA Tour figure out a path beyond going to Q school to get the kid out there?"

Lopez-Chacarra became one of the 50 highest earners in the game before playing his 10th event as a professional—a trajectory much more common in team sports like the NFL and NBA.

Making the decision to join LIV comes with competitive risk. The PGA Tour has amended its regulations to say that any player—even a nonmember, like a departing college star—who plays in an "unauthorized" event is ineligible to try to qualify for the PGA Tour for a year. One agent, who has represented players on both the PGA Tour and with LIV, is critical of how the situation has been handled by the leadership in Ponte Vedra. "On the one hand, you refuse to negotiate with LIV to create a massive influx of cash that would benefit members. Then you change the rules to block players from making their best living unless they leave. It's not just the potential prize money, but also sponsor conflicts. Want to be sponsored by somebody like UPS? Good luck. The PGA Tour has a deal with FedEx, and you won't get very far. Now it's even extending to nonmembers."

The list of golf's top women earners isn't remotely as balanced as that of professional tennis, where Serena Williams, Naomi Osaka, Iga Swiatek and Emma Raducanu are all among the top 10 in the sport. Some of the social forces reshaping sports as a whole—from the U.S. Women's National Soccer Team winning pay equal to their male counterparts to female NCAA athletes like LSU gymnast Olivia Dunne dominating the name-image-likeness market—are working their way into golf. "Brands are asking questions about

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their entire business, and if they've traditionally worked with mostly male athletes, they are asking themselves why they aren't doing more with women," says one agent, who has represented players on the PGA and LPGA tours. "The big difference between tennis and golf is the television exposure. There's so much coverage at tennis majors where men and women are playing at the same time. That television value is worth a ton, and that just doesn't exist in golf yet."

Still, the reshuffling of endorsement dollars as club manufacturers pause relationships with players like Mickelson (Callaway) and DeChambeau (Cobra) leaves more budget to spend on a variety of players. It's too simple to say Nelly Korda and Brooke Henderson signed with TaylorMade because Dustin Johnson's role with the company has, at the least, been temporarily reduced, but marketing is marketing, and TaylorMade wants eyeballs. Korda's deal with TaylorMade came the day after she signed an apparel deal with Nike, making her the highest profile female golfer since Michelle Wie West.

Minjee Lee made $10.4 million in 2022 to rank 48th on our money list, two spots ahead of World No. 1 Lydia Ko.

DANIEL POCKETT/GETTY IMAGES

ACROSS THE TOURS, SPONSOR CASH HAS BEEN TILTING TOWARD THE TOP 25 PLAYERS IN THE WORLD.

The agents interviewed for this story almost universally say it will take at least another year or two for things to become clear and the money to reach some kind of equilibrium. There's no consensus on how LIV contracts ultimately will affect the overall endorsement market beyond the visual cues we have seen so far: For LIV players, team logos have taken the place of some logos players used to be paid by outside companies to display.

Across the tours, sponsor cash is tilting toward the top of the sport. "The real needle-movers, the top-25 players in the world, they're getting paid," says one agent who has represented multiple players who have been in the top 10 in the world. "The farther you go down the list, the sparser it gets. It used to be that getting into the top 125 automatically got you an equipment deal. Now they're picking and choosing."

LIV's business model is built around team play, but the effect of the PGA Tour's move to "designated" events—and the attention stars like Rory McIlroy and Jordan Spieth are getting in the new Netflix "Full Swing" documentary—might close some of the short-term revenue gap LIV created with its signing bonuses. "[Formula 1 series] 'Drive to Survive' has definitely shown there are financial benefits for a sport to having a successful documentary to engage new audience," Harraghy says. "ESPN paid a reported $5 million a season to broadcast F1 through 2022. The new deal, capitalizing on the increased viewership of the sport, is valued at $85 million per season, and that kind of ancillary content is likely to provide branding and business opportunities for golfers should the series find a wide enough audience."

Those new economic realities are likely to create even more growing—and shrinking—pains for the haves and have nots. "We just hope everything survives, and it doesn't turn into a situation where whatever is left is a substandard version of what we have," says one agent who has more than two decades of experience representing top-50 players. "Nobody has ever seen anything like this. For anybody to say they know for sure what's going to happen next, they're selling you something or they're bluffing."

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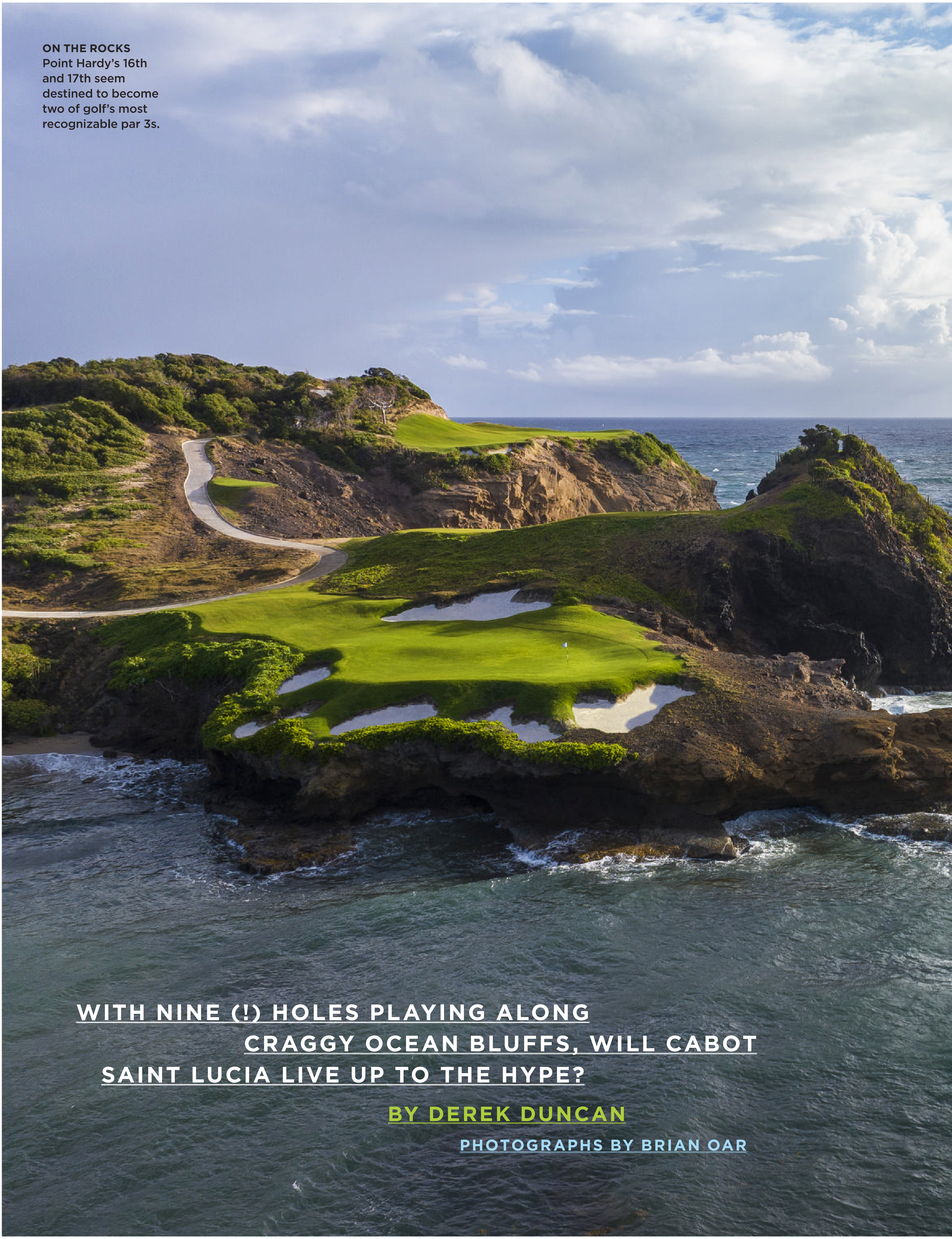

ON THE ROCKS
Point Hardy's 16th and 17th seem destined to become two of golf's most recognizable par 3s.

WITH NINE (!) HOLES PLAYING ALONG CRAGGY OCEAN BLUFFS, WILL CABOT SAINT LUCIA LIVE UP TO THE HYPE?

BY DEREK DUNCAN

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BRIAN OAR

Cliffhanger

t

The eyes of golf will burst when they see the 17th hole at Cabot Saint Lucia.

I was stricken as I stared at the Gibraltar-like escarpment of striated rock and trees rising high over a bay of aqua-clear ocean pummeling the stones below. Even in raw form, the would-be par 3 inspired the kind of tantalizing fear golfers feel when standing on elevated edges of land to strike shots over water, in this case 185 yards upward to an unseen green that would somehow be leveled into the opposite cliffside seven or eight stories above the sea. Pictures of this hole could be splashed on magazine covers, calendars, mousepads and dental-office posters embossed with scripted pearls of New Age affirmation.

SWEPT AWAY
Fourteen holes like the par-4 second possess jaw-dropping Atlantic views.

In was March 2020. I had joined architects Bill Coore, Ben Crenshaw and their longtime associate Dave Axland to walk the routing of the nascent Point Hardy Golf Club, as the course would come to be called. Construction had begun only weeks earlier, and most of the land we traversed was virgin grassland or thickets of low bush through which trails and dirt roads had been cut. Just seven of the 18 holes were cleared, but it didn't take an architectural savant to recognize that a golf course on this site near the northernmost point of Saint Lucia would have virtually no terrestrial peers in terms of relentless ocean engagement and raw visual power. Each nine climbs first into scenic uplands and then out to the coast for a series of heart-stopping set pieces that teeter on the rocky brink of land and sea. Five of the nine coastal holes require shots to be launched across sections of the Atlantic, including the 17th, the most emphatic of the quintet. For reference, Pebble Beach and Cypress Point each have three such holes. Words like spectacular and breathtaking are loaded and overused when describing golf courses, but at Cabot Saint Lucia they seem toothless.

Crenshaw was seeing the land for the first time, and he had much to digest. Here and there he drifted off to get a vantage on a certain green site or feature, as if he were already playing the course and breaking it down tactically. Crenshaw was quiet and would often stand squinting in the charged Caribbean sun for minutes, peering metaphysically into the hole's being. On his return he might say something like, "I think you should be able to enter this green from the high left side," and everyone would nod, suddenly able to access the vision. Coore ribbed whoever was around him—associates, workers, sales representatives, writers—jabbing with wry verbal feints that landed keenly, keeping everyone loose. To be targeted in this parry-and-riposte was to be included, seen. Jeff Bradley, who has worked virtually every major proj-

ect for Coore and Crenshaw since the early 1990s and is considered a visionary in terms of building bunkers, was clearing brush near the second tee. He hopped off the excavator when Bill and Ben arrived to look over the expanse of the broad par 4 that drifted naturally across a high plain, million-dollar horizons in multiple directions.

"This is looking rather good, Mr. Bradley," Coore said. "I have to say, it's not looking bad at all. What's the saying about a blind pig?"

Bradley, after a beat, said, "Every once in a while."

"That's it."

A GOLF COURSE ON THIS SITE WOULD HAVE NO PEERS IN TERMS OF RAW VISUAL POWER.

Bradley smirked. "'Every once in a while' has kept me around for a long time."

Unlike most architects since World War II, Coore and Crenshaw don't draw grading plans, elevations or technical blueprints. They work loosely, refining their holes with each pass, relying heavily on their shapers and associates to interpret their concepts and find the details in the field, and to add their ideas when inspired. Nothing is rushed or even conceived until its time is right.

We were at the bottom of the first hole, an immense par 5 that charges directly up an imposing foothill. Coore was musing on drainage and the difficulty of getting the hole to work when Rory Hutchison, who worked with ONCORE, the independent construction compa-

ISLAND HOPPING
The 16th (foreground) and 15th are two of five holes that play across ocean coves.

ny helping build the course, asked him where the tees were going to be. Coore feigned incredulity.

"Now, why'd you have to bring up the tees? I was just starting to feel good about this hole," he said. "There's always one person who knows how to say the wrong thing at the wrong time." Two holes later Coore was still razzing him. Crenshaw had gone off in another direction, but when he returned, Coore pointed to Hutchison and said, "Do you know what this guy just said to me down on one?"

Hutchison, who is from South Africa, took it with humor. He later told me that though he had been on Saint Lucia only a short time, working with Coore and Crenshaw was revealing. Hutchison has helped build courses for the most prolific names in the business, but the Coore-Crenshaw method of constructing them was different. "At every other job I've been on, the directive is to go faster, *move-move-move*. Here, Bill is telling us to slow down and look at it more closely. I love it."

I asked Axland, who has been with Coore and Crenshaw since the late 1980s and has run projects for them from Friar's Head on Long Island to Lost Farm in Tasmania, what he thought of the site. He stomped his foot on the ground and said in his deep voice, "It's a volcanic island. We're trying to build a golf course here on solid rock."

This wasn't the first attempt to build a course here. In the 2000s, a resort operation called Raffles acquired more than 350 acres for golf and housing, and Nicklaus Design began construction before the project collapsed during the 2008 recession. Coore's routing identified 11 of the same approximate green locations. Many of them, like the par-3 seventh, set on a narrow isthmus above the crags, were too good to not use. As Crenshaw said at the ninth, another par 3 playing off a hill to a meadow set level against ocean bluffs, "If you can't identify these green sites, you should consider another line of work."

Coore knew building a course on Saint Lucia was going to be challenging. Constructing international courses in the best circumstances presents hurdles, including unique permitting and environmental regulations, navigating local political dynamics and supply-chain delays. Working in the tropics, with special

'IT'S A VOLCANIC ISLAND. WE'RE TRYING TO BUILD A GOLF COURSE HERE ON SOLID ROCK.'

climate, turf, foresting and topographical (or lack thereof) considerations, intensifies the effort and explains why there are so few excellent courses in the Caribbean. The Saint Lucia property also possessed severe transitions between the lowland holes and higher inland sections. Bridging these would require a degree of grading and site manipulation beyond the comfort zone of Coore and Crenshaw, who typically work on milder gradients, usually in more malleable sand. At one point, Coore even encouraged Cabot co-founder and CEO Ben Cowan-Dewar to settle for a par-3 course, with all the holes by the water.

Coore enlisted ONCORE, run by Jim Barger, to handle the major earthworks and says they would not have accepted the job had Barger not signed on. Barger had worked in other Caribbean environments, and though Cabot Saint Lucia would be extreme, he believed the site could be tamed. Coore, however, still had doubts about the potential playability given the forbidding elevation changes. "The very things that make the golf course so visually spectacular are also what make it extremely difficult when working on playability," he said.

He was particularly concerned with the aggressively uphill first hole and the par-4 fifth that ski jumps off the same ridge in the opposite direction: It was nothing but a jungle that plunged down a ravine (the fifth and sixth holes fall more than 200 feet from high point to the shoreline). "Everybody's out here looking at the ocean, and we're looking at what's right in front of us," Coore said. "Those valleys aren't there for no reason. When it rains, it's going to be a raging river."

The par-5 14th is another adventure that plays blindly over a basin toward an earthen embankment requiring industrial-level cuts, the rest of the hole buried somewhere beyond it in forest. Around the corner, the sight of the 15th hole is one of the most sensational reveals imaginable. Drives at the short par 4 are hit over a bay of thundering surf toward a diagonal wall of rock and a hidden fairway that would have to be pounded into the mountainside: The more aggressive the line, the longer the carry. The hole is a unicorn, an angry one that bucks, and I could think of no analogue in terms of strategy or visceral awe, nor any obvious way it could be constructed. "That's a Jim Barger hole," Coore said, matter of factly.

We came to the 17th like rainforest archeologists stumbling upon a monolithic ruin. Crenshaw scrutinized the fortress-like facade. "I definitely want a straight-faced club for this shot," he said finally. He whistled and made a ballooning gesture with his hand, the imaginary golf ball slicing in parabolic freefall toward the Atlantic. Cowan-Dewar had been there waiting with another Cabot official. "Isn't this spectacular?"

"It is a truly spectacular piece of land," Coore said, parsing in his tone.

"Come look at this tee up here," Cowan-Dewar said. I followed him up a rise of maybe 20 feet through thorny bushes to a small promontory. From here the view of the prospective green was clearer, as was the panorama of the sea. To the right the land fell perhaps 80 feet straight down to the rocks.

"Can you imagine hitting this shot?" he said.

"Ben, I don't think we can build a tee up there," Coore said from below. "We can't be sure that's stable."

"Bill, it would be one of the greatest tees in golf."

"I know, but I'm not sending any of my guys up on that," Coore said. "I'm not going to call the families of my guys to tell them they're dead because that whole thing fell into the ocean. I'm not going to a funeral." This drew a chuckle, even from Cowan-Dewar, despite the adamancy behind Coore's words.

It's no surprise a golf visionary like Cowan-Dewar could find a way to make an already jaw-dropping hole even more extraordinary. Cowan-Dewar, who is 43, was just 25 in the mid-2000s when he approached Mike Keiser, the developer of Bandon Dunes, about creating a Canadian equivalent on the remote northern end of Cape Breton Island. That partnership led to the opening in 2011 of Cabot Links (designed by Rod Whitman, with a strong assist from Dave Axland) and then, four years later, Coore and Crenshaw's Cabot Cliffs, currently ranked the No. 1 course in Canada by Golf Digest. Cabot Cape Breton became the cornerstone of a growing Cabot enterprise (Keiser is also a partner in Cabot Saint Lucia) that has new courses and residential developments under construction in British Columbia, Scotland and Florida. The Saint Lucia project also includes a real estate component of 300 custom-built homes and villas surrounding the course. Eventually resident-member play will fill the course, but early on Point Hardy will be open to island visitors staying at nearby resorts.

The discussion of Cowan-Dewar's auxiliary tee was put on hold, and we moved down the 18th, a short par 5

HEAVEN AND EARTH
The fifth, sixth and seventh plunge from the highlands to the shoreline.

FIVE DISTINCT PAR 3S ARE ARGUABLY THE MOST EXHILARATING COLLECTION ON THE PLANET.

where the second or third shot is hit over Donkey Beach to another bluff-side green. On the left the foothills stood unbothered as they had for millennia, and on the right sunlight glimmered off the rippling ocean, the mutating blues mirroring a sky that held more warmth and clarity than can be described. All the colors of light and earth seemed to be refracting though some invisible prism. It felt so calm and optimal and full of promise. No one could predict how it was about to change.

THE DOGS OF SAINT LUCIA HAVE evolved a special trait that allows them to scramble away from the wheels of moving vehicles at just the last moment. Either that or the mortality rate is off the charts. I learned this on the drive to Cabot Saint Lucia when I returned to see the course in November 2021. Most people who go there—including future Point Hardy players—fly into Hewanorra International Airport near Vieux Fort Quarter in the extreme south, then take a car or shuttle toward the Cap Estate section in the north. Saint Lucia is only 27½ miles from tip to tail, but the twisting ride though the forests, banana plantations and mountain passes in the heart of the island, past village after small village of homes, bodegas and prancing canines tucked alongside the two-lane road takes about two hours. The rest take a helicopter from Hewanorra to a landing station in Castries. That takes 10 minutes.

Many things had happened in the intervening 19 months, not the least of which was a global pandemic that threw the construction schedule into chaos. Any time major development is proposed in a paradisal but economically modest location (the World Bank ranks Saint Lucia 189 out of 214 countries in GDP), tensions arise between the forces of capitalism and those of conservation and cultural preservation. Saint Lucia is no exception. Resistance in certain quarters arose early when word leaked that the country's pension fund had loaned Cabot more than $10 million of the reported $13.8 million needed to buy the 375-acre property out of receivership, a price many believe was well below market value (Cabot has since repaid the loan, with interest). Disputes also arose over the potential disruption of ancient Amerindian burial sites, the protection of a grove of organ pipe cactus near the ninth and 18th greens where wild horses grazed, the dislocation of a famous local eatery on Cabot land and public access to the beaches below the golf holes.

When it came to building the course, these were minor, though not unimportant, impediments. The bigger challenges were logistical. Businesses and then borders began closing just days after I had departed in 2020, and Dave Axland and Jeff Bradley left Saint Lucia on some of the last flights out. Concerned about re-entry if he went home, Keith Rhebb, a Coore-Crenshaw associate since 2007, elected to stay behind to ensure the design team had someone onsite while the world shut down. Rhebb continued to work the land through the worst of the pandemic with a small crew grooming the most obstinate regions, including pulling soil into the basin of the fifth. Remarkably, they began to look like golf holes.

Canadian designer Trevor Dormer joined Rhebb in spring 2021. He was immediately taken by the setting. "This is going to be a very emotional golf course," he told me. By November they had made significant progress, and several holes were sand-capped, the necessary process of covering them in four inches of local pumice sand before the grass seed could go down. Another critical issue, however, had come up: water. The original plan to tap into the local supply for irrigation fell apart, and now they were waiting for a reverse osmosis plant that would desalinate pumped-in ocean water. It, too, was delayed. Without water there could be no grass.

Optimistic projections initially had the course opening in 2021, but now it looked like late 2022 would be the best-case scenario. Coore took a sanguine view of setbacks. "I happen to really believe that the golf course at Cabot Saint Lucia has benefited from the fact—as horrible as that sounds because of the often-tragic circumstances—that the whole process slowed down and allowed the guys to work on the playability aspects of some of those more extreme holes that we worried about."

The pandemic provided another paradoxical benefit: increased interest in golf and investment properties. "Probably at no time in history did the demand for Caribbean real estate skyrocket as much as it did than through the pandemic—it was just the right moment in time for this project," Cowan-Dewar said, noting that the closing rate for prospective buyers who visited was "almost 100 percent." Phase I sales generated more than $120 million, and Phase II lots are currently priced between $1.6 million and $9.75 million. A third phase will follow.

Once Coore determines a course's routing, he and Crenshaw design by

walking. Trim and tireless at age 77, Coore has likely walked more miles through golf terrain than any designer in history. He will frequently spend days or even a week exploring a site for a job he and Crenshaw will ultimately decline to build. As they surveyed the Cabot holes, no detail was too small for dissection, and their directives to Rhebb and Dormer were invariably explained in the language of subtraction. "Let's soften this," Coore might say, or, motioning to a line of trees, "Let's break that up a little."

At the fourth hole, a Redan-inspired par 3, Crenshaw saw slopes and grades invisible to my eye. "Take this hump down a little," he said to Rhebb with a smoothing hand motion. "Not much." The 14th hole had been cleared and somehow transformed into a freeway par 5 that thunders downhill, then up to a green set atop a palisade. Crenshaw scrutinized an imperceptible mound at the green entrance and said to Dormer, "Just calm this area down. A player down there won't be able to see the shoulder of these bunkers."

Coore concurred. "Let's just take the air out a bit."

The architects treat their properties as curators, designing off the land and salvaging anything that can be incorporated into a hole, however modest: an existing drainage trench inspired a wraparound bunker in front of the 13th green; large, mysterious mounds of debris on the right side of the third fairway became an anomalous shaggy grass berm; a rock quarry at the second now encloses half the green. Rhebb and Dormer joked that they are careful not to leave any unintentional shapes in the ground because Bill and Ben might use them.

When alterations are made, they look natural. The peninsula 16th green—the first of the consecutive cross-cove par 3s that on any other property, in any other universe, would be considered the most transcendent on the course—appears to have been waiting eons for golf to arrive. "Most people look at number 16 and think, *Oh, there's a hole just sitting there*," Coore said. "Well, there wasn't. Keith Rhebb worked tremendously hard to get that severe slope just right, so you might very well look at it and say that in fact it was just sitting there."

"This is where I was most nervous to make a big move," Rhebb said, gesturing to the pitched green. "It was the biggest opportunity to mess up. Me and Trevor are aware we might never get another chance to build a hole like this."

That is, unless you count the 17th, one

TRANQUIL WATERS Compared to the clashing drama surrounding it, the par-3 ninth appears deceptively sedate.

that remains outrageous in presentation and the degree of transformation. I went up to the promontory with Rhebb and Dormer but found there was still no tee box. "This is truly a fantasy-golf hole," Coore announced, peering across the chasm as the wind quartered. "This is a hole Ben Cowan-Dewar wanted built. It's fantasy golf," he repeated.

"Bill wants that in print," Rhebb quipped.

At the green, Crenshaw praised Rhebb and Dormer for the enormous technical accomplishment of getting the putting surface and surrounds playable and receptive to long shots, then gave them notes on how to modify it. More notes came for alterations of the 18th green complex, which Dormer later said has gone through three or four iterations. I commented that most architects would have worked out the contours and grades well ahead of time and translated them from software programs into executable blueprints.

"Do you hear that? Computers are replacing you, Trevor," Coore said. "The 18th at Saint Lucia may be your last green."

"Just a minute ago you were praising him."

"I don't respond well to compliments," Dormer said.

"That's good to know," Coore said. "Now I know I can be honest."

Late in the day I stood along with Coore beneath the 10th hole that ascends a slope, similar to the first. Terraces and landing pads had been platformed into the fairway to hold up balls, and in dirt form it looked like a Q*bert pyramid. Cactus patches dotted the hillside, and mottled-green scrub vegetation blanketed the background elevations. Other than more topsoil exposed and the distant rumbling of a truck or excavator, Cabot Saint Lucia didn't feel different than the first time I'd seen the course. Even the horses were still around.

It wasn't going to stay that way. The tractors would be up in those foothills soon, clearing roads and building homes and carports and plunge pools. Though the houses were to be tastefully, even beautifully designed using indigenous stone, wood and brass, golfers were going to look around them and see not the natural visages of a section of Caribbean island that had managed to escape man-made artifice through centuries of settlement and occupation but patios and glinting glass. I was as excited as anyone for the otherworldly potential of the golf and would happily line up to play it, as will so many others, but looking at this scenery it was impossible to not also understand that something significant was being sacrificed. Then again, without ocean-view homes to finance the project, there would be no golf, and no pulse-pounding coastline holes that faraway people will dream of playing. Was that preferable?

In so many inarticulate words I shared this thought with Coore, but it wasn't a question either one of us could answer.

LACK OF WATER HAD PREVENTED Cabot Saint Lucia from growing grass, and now water was what prevented the grass from growing. The reverse-osmosis plant—which looks like a shipping container attached to three squat circulation cylinders—arrived and was operational by spring 2022, and the first parts of the course had taken seed. Dormer, after going back to Canada for the summer, returned in September to see the course to completion as delays pushed grassing of the remainder of the course into the fall. Then came the rain.

Hurricane season on a tropical island is volatile, and storms deluged the course with three to four inches of hard tropical rain at a time. The paspalum

TRANSPORTED The portal to the "secret" promontory tee overlooking the par-3 17th hole.

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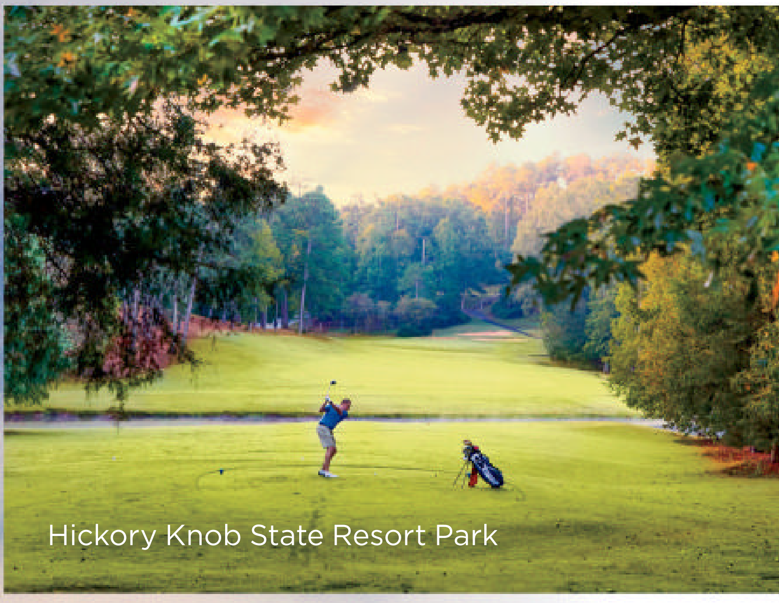

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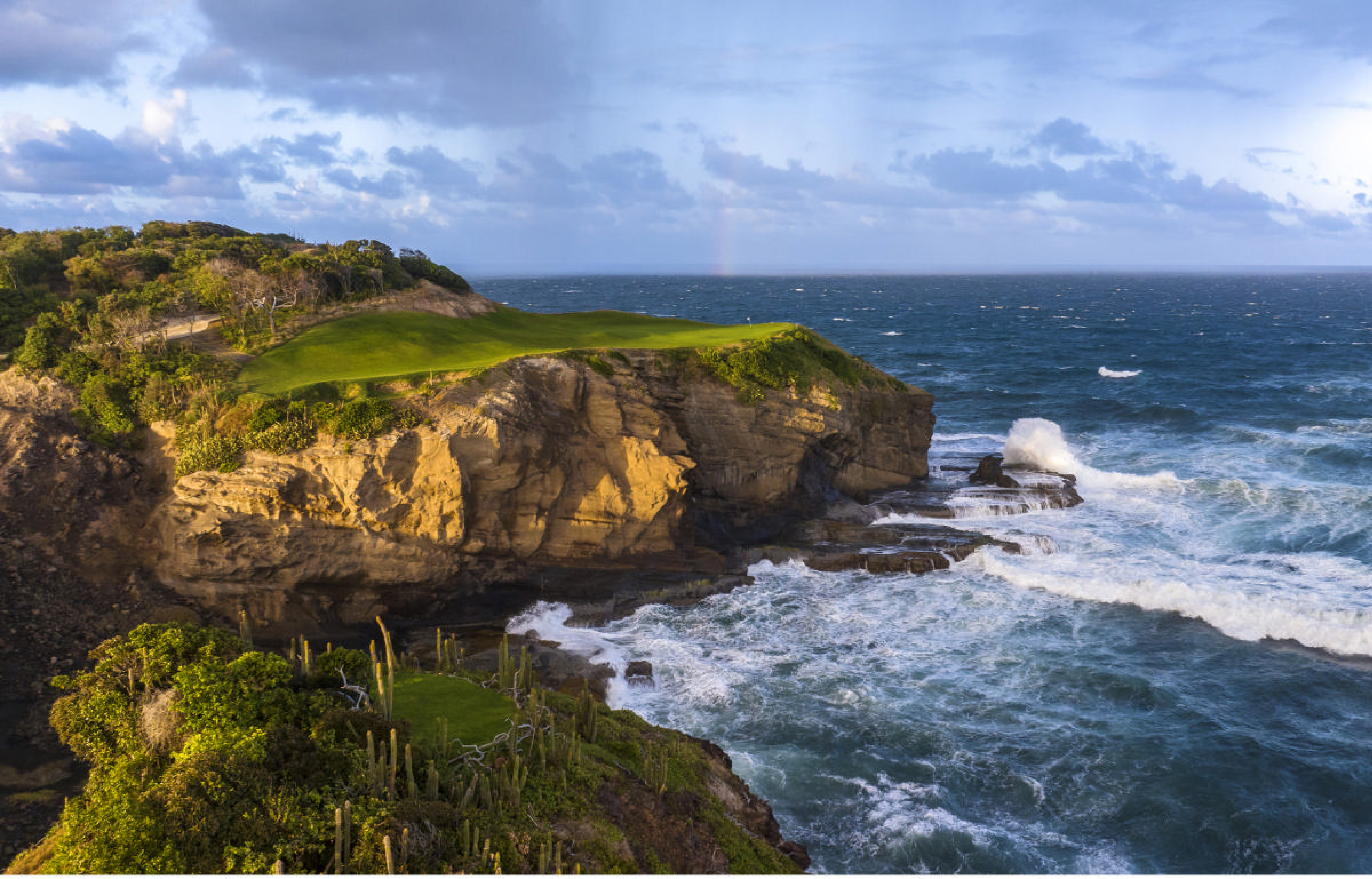

DRAMATIC SHORT Bill Coore describes the par-3 17th playing over rocks and surf as "fantasy golf."

grass washed out along with some of the ground features, especially on the steeper inclines. Crews would repair the damage, and more seed would go down only to be erased by another storm. The cycle continued into January, and Dormer began to feel the task was Sisyphean. "We've literally built this course three times," he said. "If we see clouds out there, everybody just gets nervous."

Dormer devised a stop-gap measure of covering the fairways with netting and building V-shape fords out of plywood that funneled sheeting water into diversion pipes. This invention saved the project from more washouts, and by the time I visited again this February, the grass on the troubled holes was beginning to take root. Jim Barger, however, who was back on site, cautioned another rainy season was coming in May.

Nevertheless, optimism was running high again with hopes of a December 2023 opening. On another walk-through I ran into Rory Hutchison, who had been on the project continually since inception. "In a way the site's been very good to us," he said. "It rains, and we think we're not going to be able to work, but it dries out quickly because of the ocean breeze." Final construction and design decisions remained only on 11, 12 and 13 that come as aperitifs before the final fivesome of Michelin-starred seaside holes. Crenshaw and Dormer discussed a feature that looked like a scaled-down pitcher's mound in the dirt of the 12th green. "This is really good," Crenshaw said. "Don't let anybody touch that." After looking at the 11th green for some time, he said, "I see a bowl here in the front left." The two analyzed its merits, then flagged out the dimensions.

This surface crafting and consideration of how balls move over the ground runs silently in the background of every Coore-Crenshaw course. Equally thoughtful, and more obvious, is their treatment of the course's five distinct par 3s, arguably the most exhilarating collection on the planet, playing to different lengths, orientations and operatic exposures. There are no weaknesses. Seeing them grassed made their detailing come alive, and when I went again to the 17th hole, none of the bewilderment had subsided. I hiked up a dirt trail leading to the promontory, bending through a small passage in the bush and emerging on a tiny bright spit of level grass with a bird's-eye view of the cliffside green and just enough room to swing a club. Coore insists none of his men built it, but one way or another Ben Cowan-Dewar got his tee.

The full story has yet to play out, but it seems inevitable that the game will soon be fixated on Cabot Saint Lucia. Point Hardy will not be one of Coore and Crenshaw's most architecturally profound designs because no architecture can compete with the pyrotechnics exploding along the shoreline. The most rewarding and complex holes may be those farthest from the water, like two, 11, 12 or 13. Coore, predictably, remained tempered. "Anybody can build one of the most visually dramatic courses in the world on this site, but is anyone going to want to play it? Or is it going to be a course where people go and play it one time, and that's it? That was our biggest concern from the beginning." Tending to the script, he added, "But you know, I'm slowly beginning to think this could have a chance to work." Ⓖ

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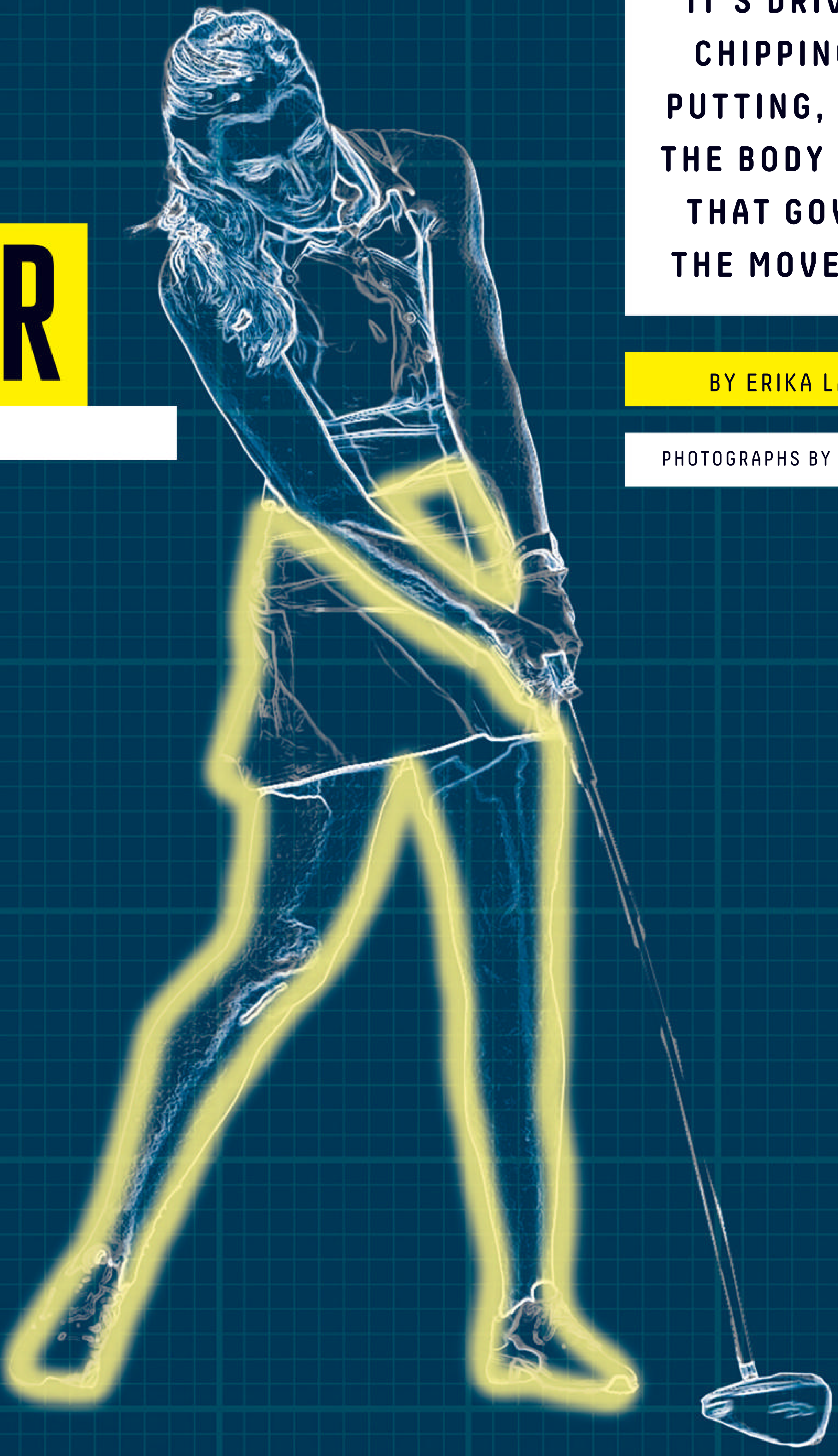
BY ERIKA LARKIN

PHOTOGRAPHS BY J.D. CUBAN



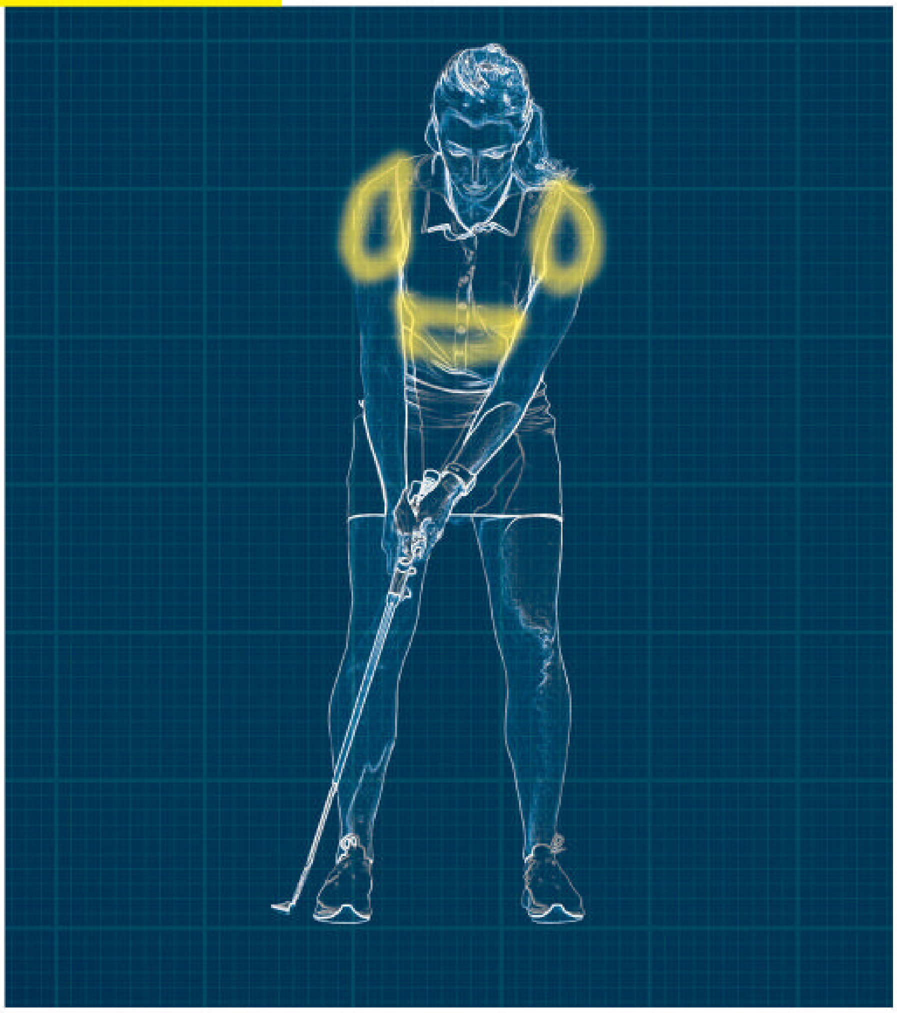
When you're looking to improve from tee to green, it's important to understand what parts of your body should control the swing. But here's the thing: The prime movers change depending on the type of swing you're trying to make. For example, the muscles most responsible for your driver swings should be the least active when you putt. And the "engine" of your chips is different from what you call upon for a full iron shot.

Not only is it important to know the muscles that govern each type of shot, you also should know the order they need to "fire" to execute the swing. The sequence of movement is crucial to get right, no matter the play. The problem is, a lot of golfers are overactive with the wrong parts of the body—and at the wrong times—which leads to poor execution. While working with hundreds and hundreds of amateurs, I've found many mistakes are often from a lack of understanding of what they're supposed to do. If that's you, let me help you get it right.

On the following pages, I'm first going to explain what muscles are key to the three most common swings in golf—putts, greenside shots and full-swing shots—and then I'll tell you how to correctly sequence the activity for each. Finally, to really engrain the fundamental movements, I'll give you some drills that will turn all of this into good mechanics when you play. Whether you're looking to hit it farther, get up and down more often around the greens or hole more par and birdie putts, these tips on how to "start your engines" can lead to big gains on the golf course. Let's begin with your putting stroke.

—WITH MADELINE MACCLURG

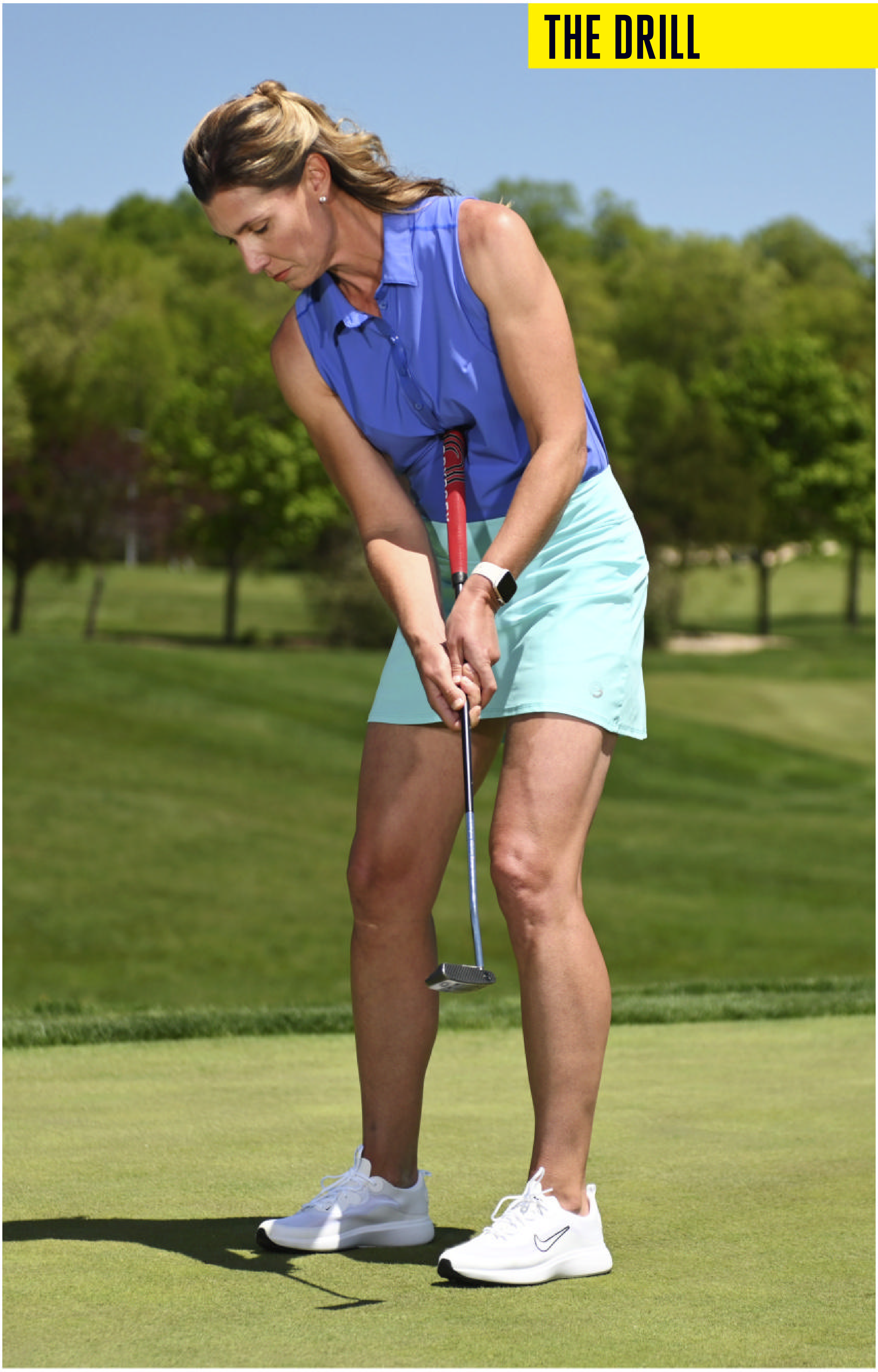
PUTTING: RECRUIT YOUR UPPER BODY



Note the highlighted area of my body (*above, right*). Think of it like a heat map that reveals the true engine of the putting stroke. The big muscles of your upper body, not the smaller ones in your arms, are what provide the motion, delivering the putter's face squarely into the ball.

I want you to imagine that your putter is a pendulum and to think of your shoulders, back and upper core muscles as the rigid support that suspends the putter's shaft. Now pick a fixed point in the center of your chest for your pendulum to pivot back and through. Choosing a high pivot point will help you avoid leading with the hands and arms, which is a common sequence fault that leads to less control of the face and stroke. Focusing on your shirt buttons is a good visual to use as the fixed axis.

The stroke is a small, controlled rotation around your spine—not a rocking motion up and down. Feel the upper-body muscles working together as they deliver the clubface into the ball smoothly with no flicking of the hands and wrists.

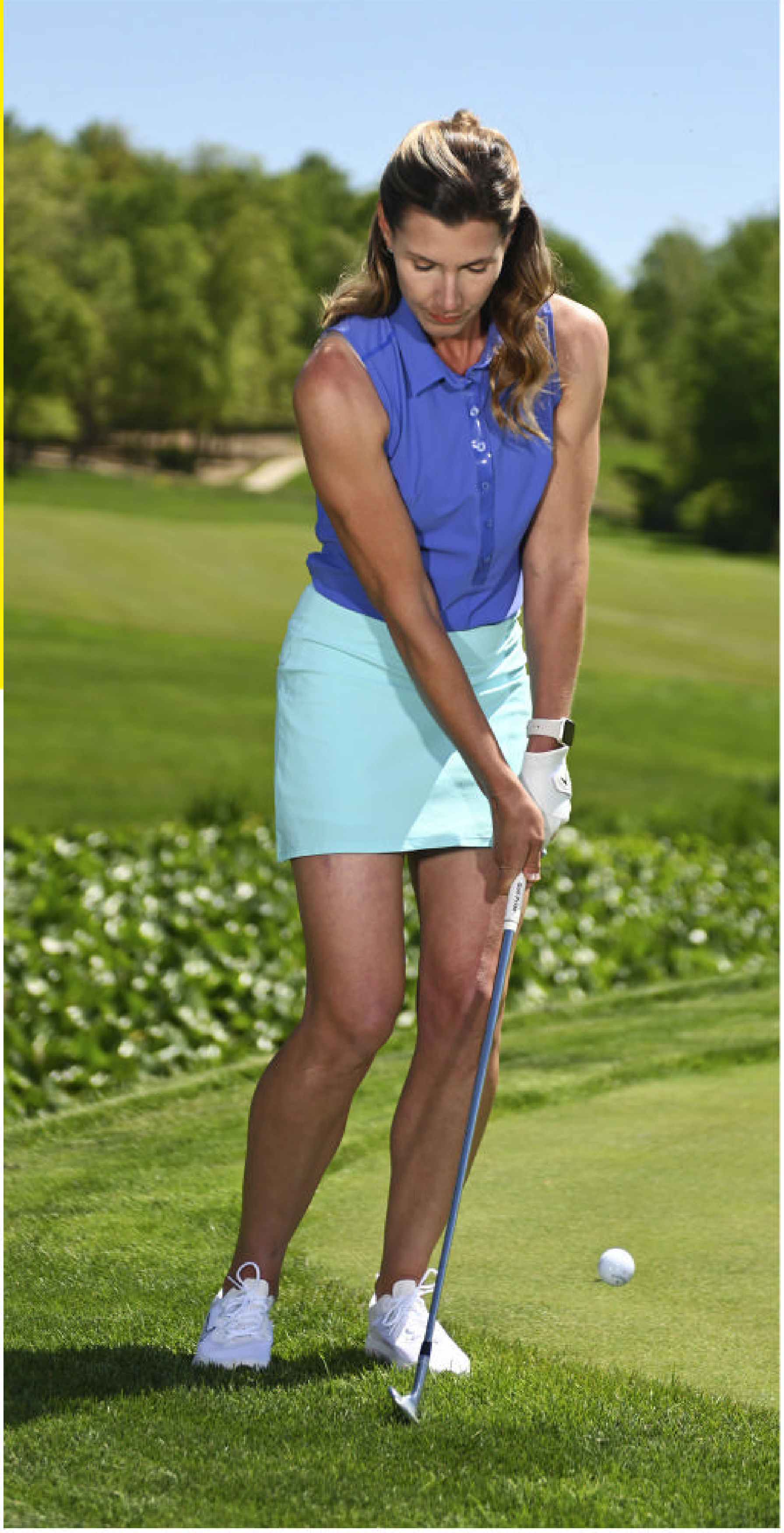


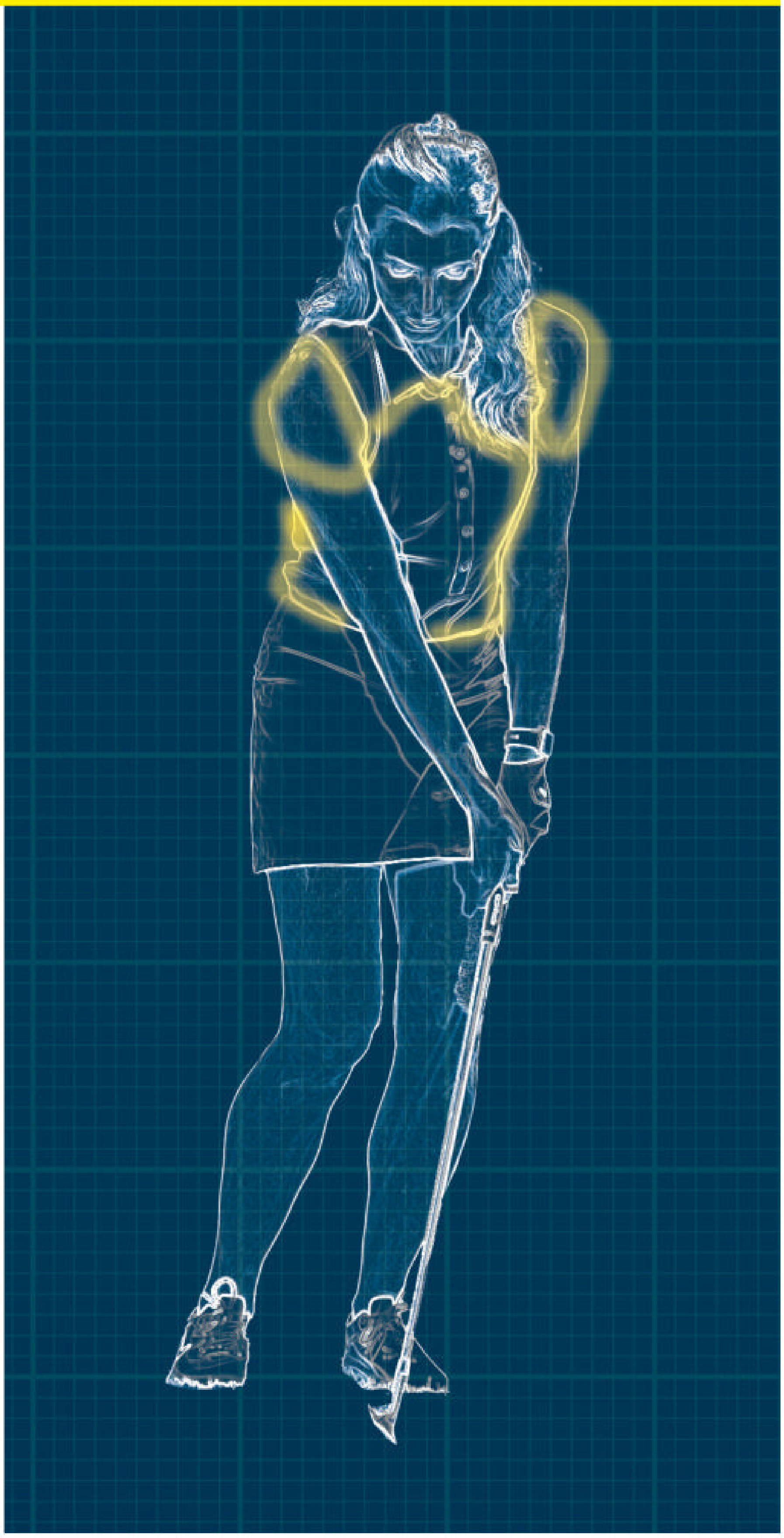
THE DRILL

Hold your putter so the butt end is touching your sternum (*left*). Keep a soft bend in your arms, letting your hands find their natural distance from your body. Standing in your normal putting setup, make a few smooth strokes letting the putterhead move while the butt end stays fixed into your sternum. Everything should feel connected but not stiff. As you practice this motion, understand that your spine is the axis you're moving the puttherhead around. You should feel your shoulders, back and upper core muscles working together as the engine of the stroke.

Repeat this "anchored" practice drill for a few minutes, and then go back to hitting some putts trying to recreate the feel of the anchored stroke. The goal is to maintain that high pivot point as you swing back and through.

SHORT SHOTS: GET YOUR MIDSECTION INVOLVED





This heat map (*above, right*) shows that short shots recruit some of the same muscles as a putting stroke. The upper body is definitely involved. The difference is that the lower core muscles and hips are also part of the engine. From the shoulders down to the pelvis, everything is moving as one unit in these greenside shots—that's the proper sequencing.

Start in a narrow stance with your feet and hips slightly open in relation to your target and weight on your front foot. This open stance presets some of the hip rotation needed to propel the arms and club into a good impact position. Favoring your front foot will help you rotate your hips and upper body over your front leg like it's a post. A common mistake I see is failing to keep your weight forward in an attempt to help the ball airborne.

When you take the club back, your wrists should hinge in proportion to the swing (bigger swings call for more hinge). Then it's a matter of rotating your body as a unit toward the target, letting the club glide along the turf.

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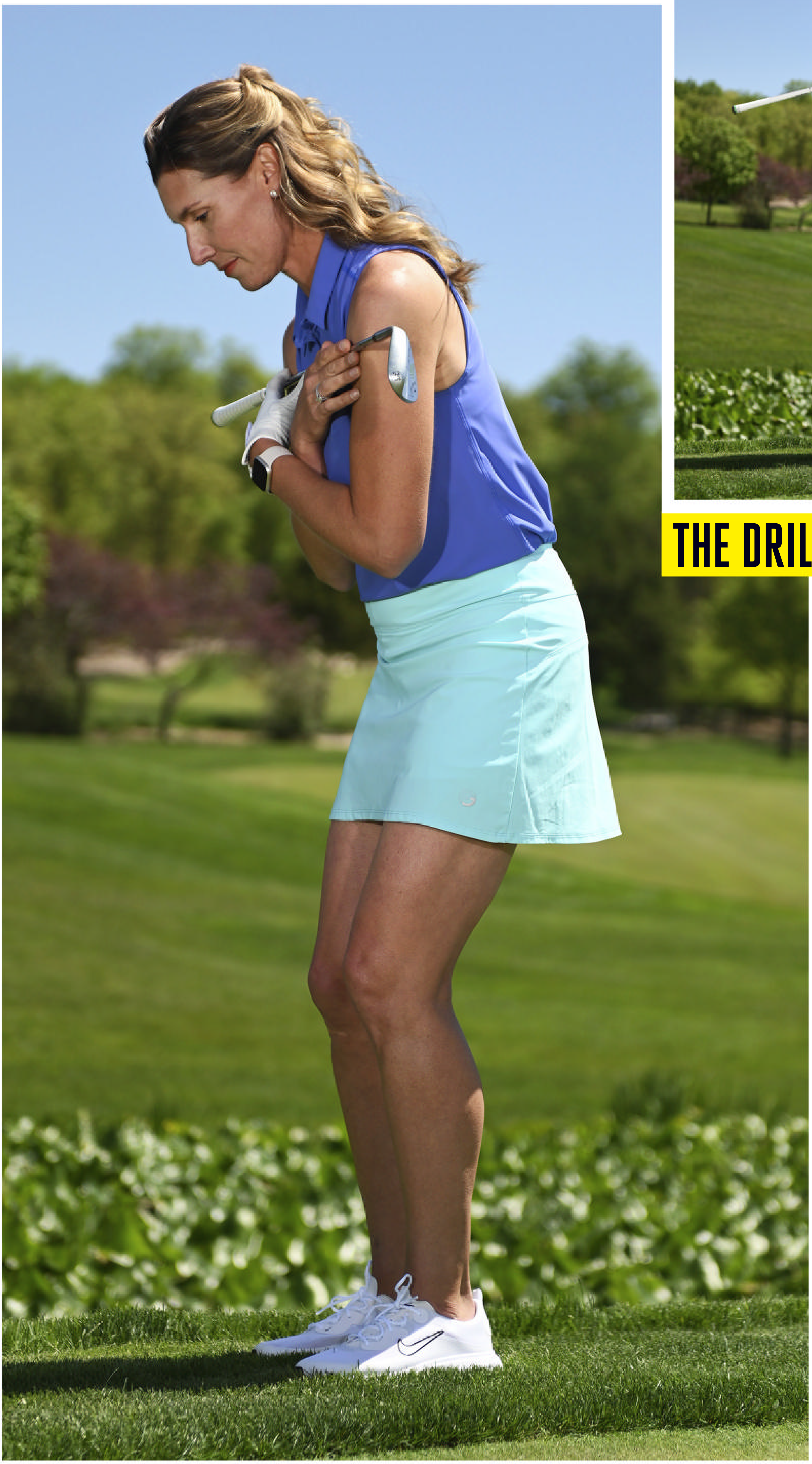

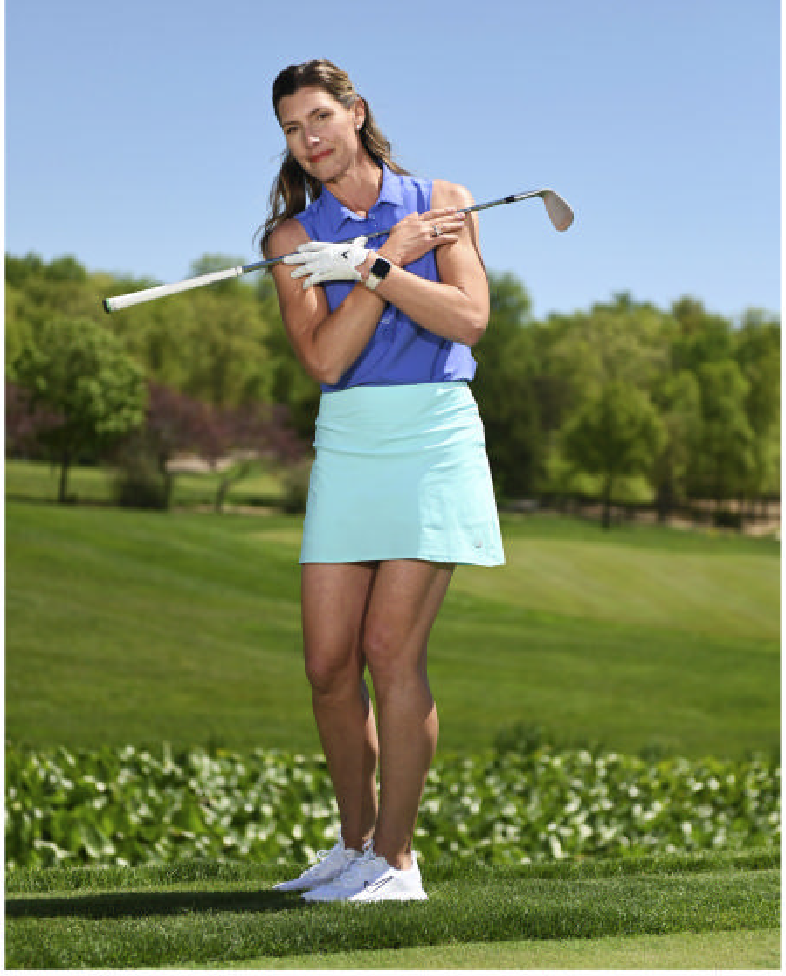

THE DRILL

Grab a wedge, hold it across your upper body, then mimic your normal chipping setup (*left*). Be sure to position your nose over your front leg and put most of your weight on that leg as you get in position. Now make a few small clubless swings pivoting a little over and around your front leg. After a few reps, expand your rotation and let your pelvis and upper body move toward the target as one unit (*above*).

Once you feel confident in your ability to pivot the hips, core and torso together over your front leg, it's time to take that wedge off your chest and hit some greenside shots. Again, your focus should be moving the club with your body rotation—not solely with your arms. If you keep your weight planted firmly on that front foot and rotate, the club will skim along the turf and pop the ball up effortlessly.

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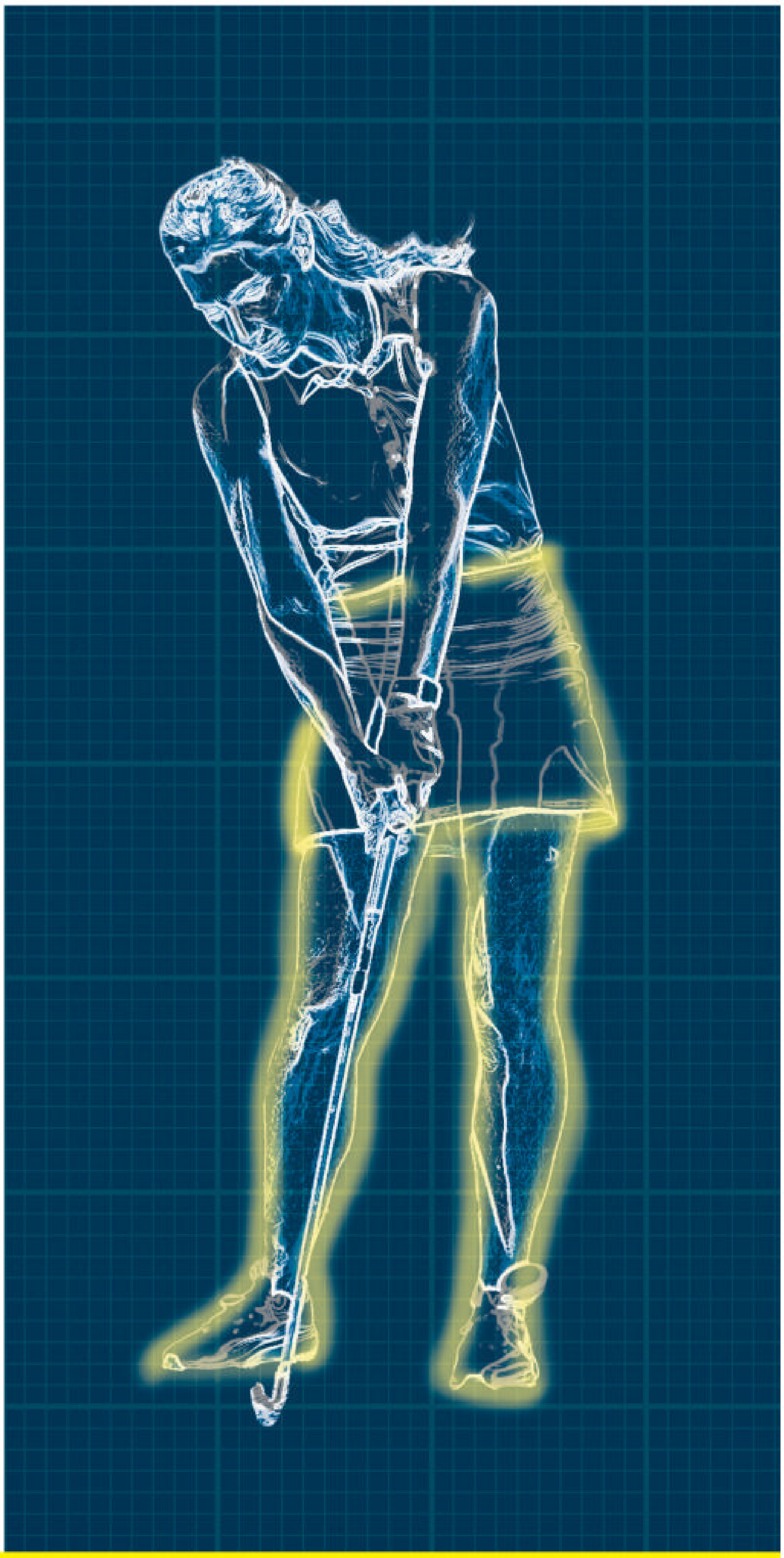

FULL SWING: LEAD WITH YOUR LEGS

Referencing the heat map one last time, you can see the lower body is mostly responsible for powering the full swing. During the backswing, you want to transfer most of your weight into the trail leg, planting firmly. Once you've loaded up on that trail leg and are ready to swing down into the ball, use your feet to start the sequence. Shift your weight toward the target and then fire your hips at it. Remember that your arms should follow this shift-and-fire move. Many golfers start down with the arms first, but that's incorrect sequencing and leads to a lot of issues including slices, pulls and poor contact.

If you want to straighten out your shots and add some more pop to them, lead with the legs. Pushing against the ground forcefully causes your lower body to naturally unwind ahead of your arms and club. This creates a rubber-band effect that unleashes your clubhead through the impact zone with a lot of speed. I call this action "uncoiling from the top," and it happens as a result of that hard push off with your lead leg.

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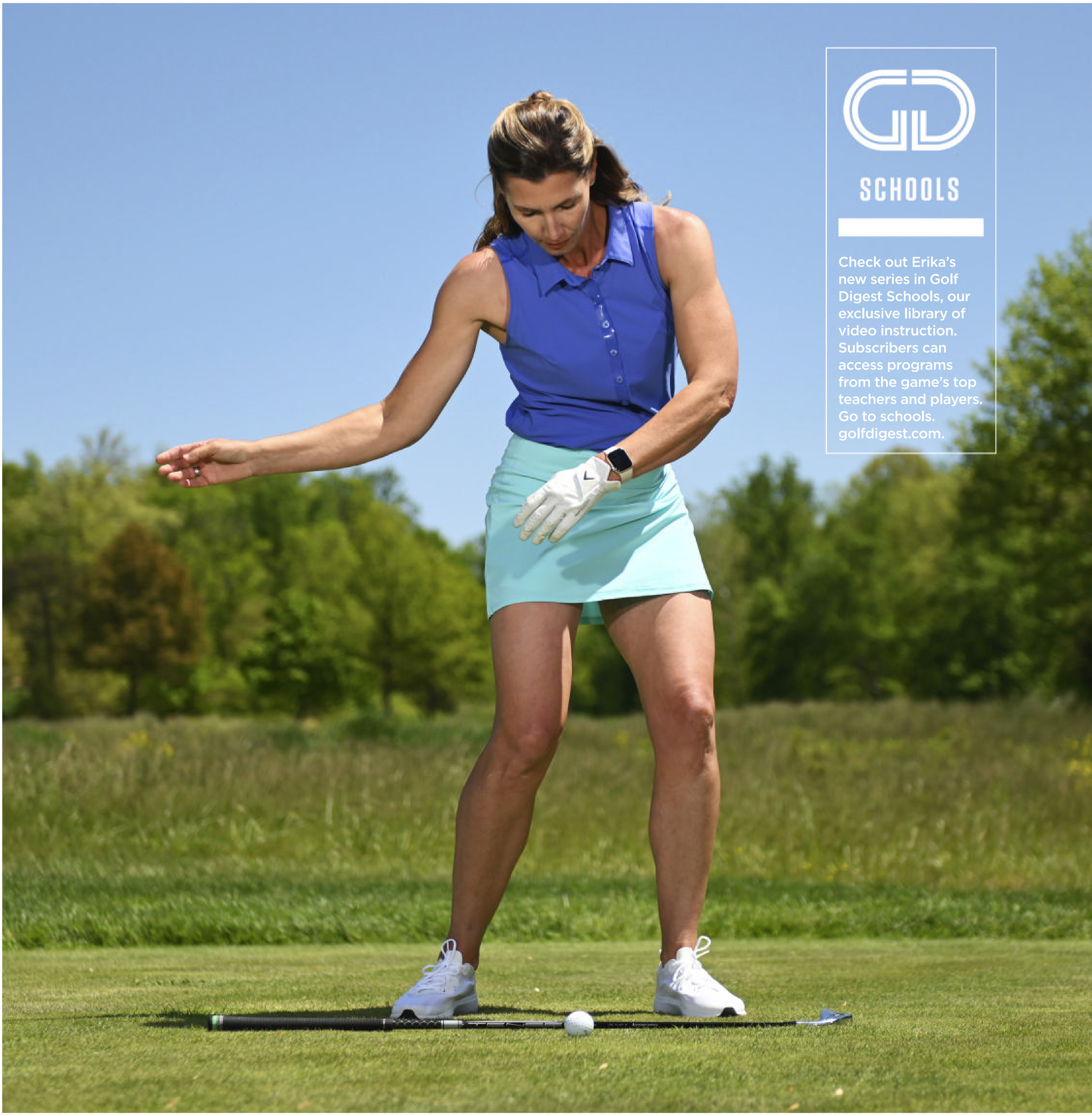
THE DRILL

Ditch your clubs, but get into your address posture for an iron shot, letting your arms hang about a foot apart. Try to maintain this gap as you mimic your backswing. Pause at the end of it, and then pretend you're swinging down and through. I want you to imagine that all the muscles of the upper body have turned off. Your lower body should rotate toward the target while your arms lag behind, feeling like passengers along for the ride (*below*). Continue making these "rag doll" arm swings without pausing to reset, letting the end of one flow into the start of the next.

Similarly to how the putting stroke is governed by the upper body and the mid body plays a key role in short-game shots, rehearsing this lower-body-first through-swing will help you fire up the right engine and properly sequence your full swings.



SCHOOLS

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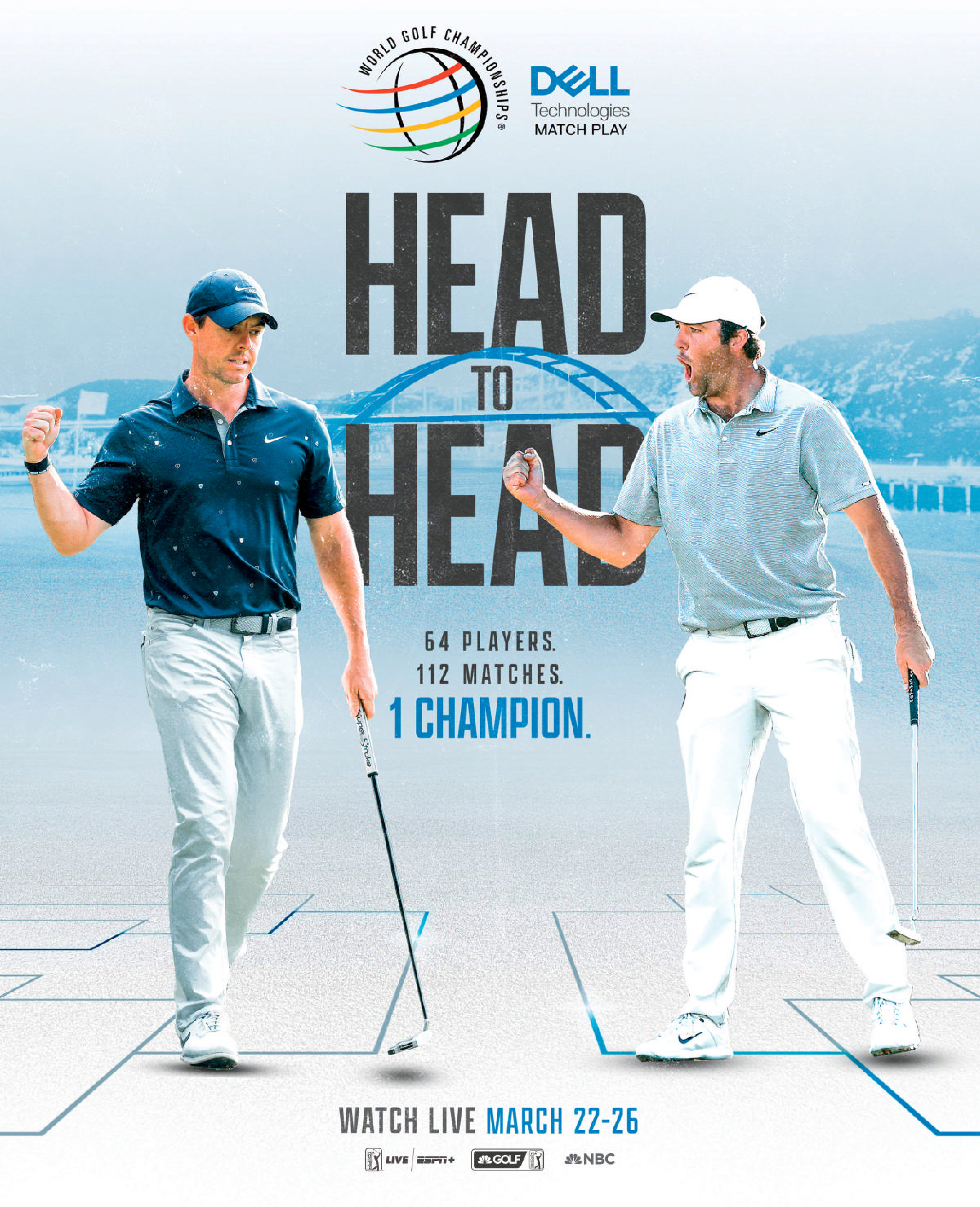
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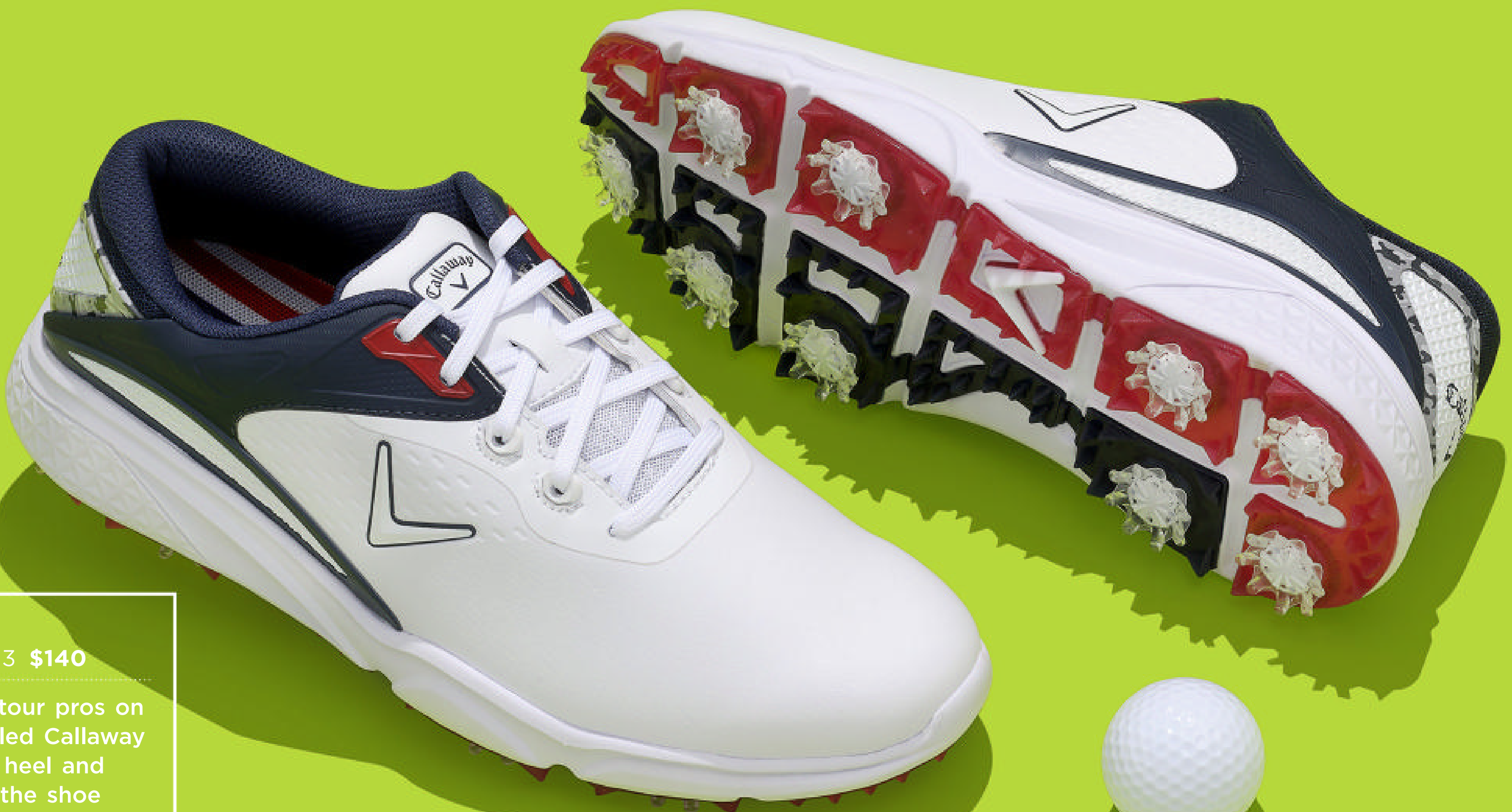
EIGHT SHOES TO KEEP YOU **GROUNDED** AND **IN CONTROL** OF YOUR SWING

BY KEELY LEVINS • PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOSH DICKINSON



CALLAWAY
CORONADO V3 **$140**

Feedback from tour pros on earlier versions led Callaway to reinforce the heel and perimeter. Now the shoe offers ample support when weight shifts to the edges of the feet during the swing. The microfiber leather upper is also waterproof.

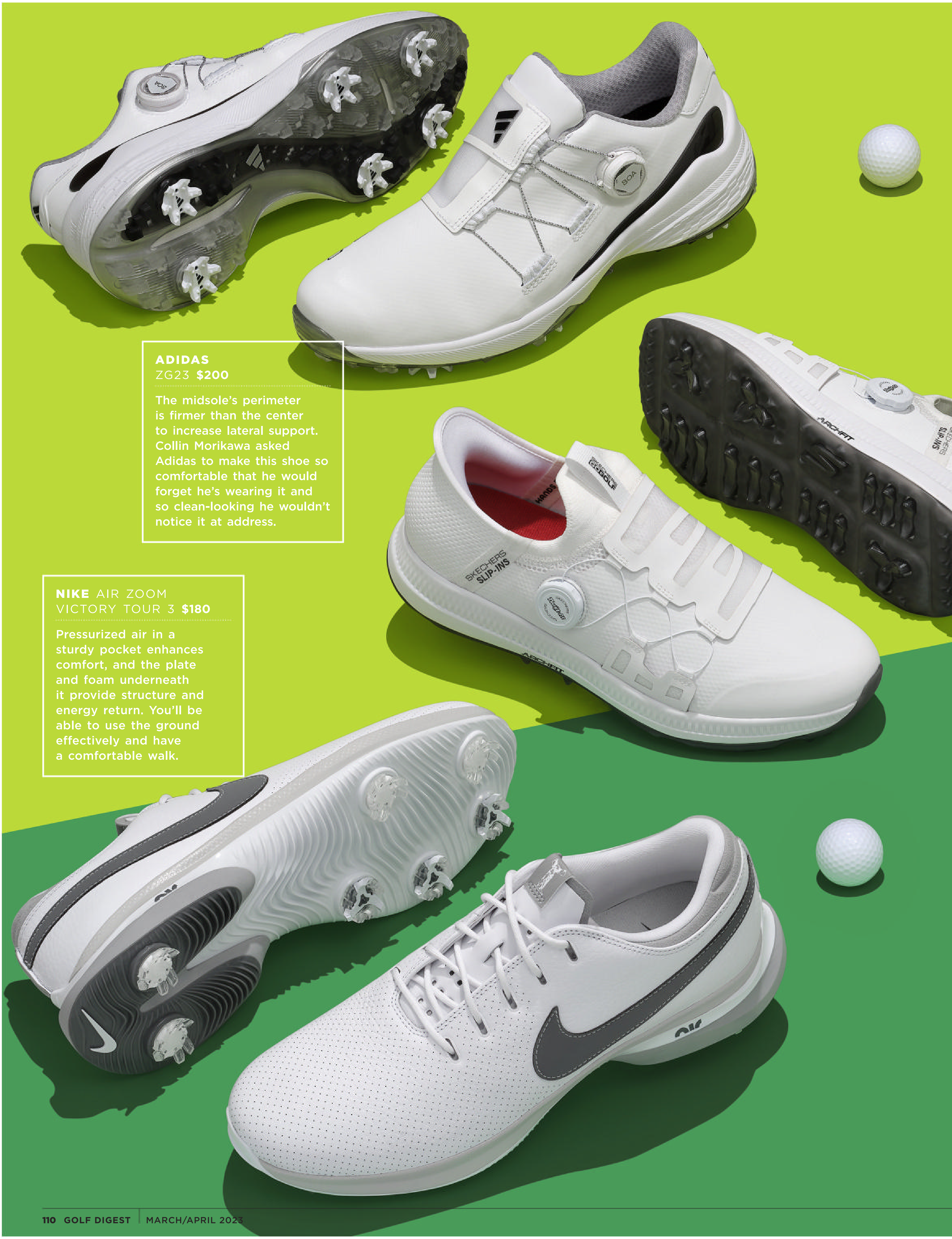
FOOTJOY
HYPERFLEX **$170/$200**

The HyperFlex, already popular with walkers for its feathery weight, is now more stable. A plastic section wraps around the mid-foot as you tighten the laces. One version also has a carbon plate for even more structure.

ECCO
CLASSIC HYBRID **$220**

The first classic shoe Ecco has made in years has an old-school-looking upper and a new outsole. The traction bars are larger than in previous Ecco models and have been rotated at the toe, a high-wear area, to increase traction.

WE LOVE WALKING THE FAIRWAYS IN A stylish pair of golf shoes as much as anyone, but don't let looks distract you from finding shoes that fit. We're talking more than the correct size. If you want to play your best, find shoes that favor your style of play. Do you over rotate during the swing? You may need a shoe with more perimeter structure. Always walk? A cushioned midsole is a must. ▸ "Players on tour know how important fit is," says Lydia Ko, the women's World No. 1. "Your feet are the only thing that's connected to the ground. It's such a critical piece of equipment golfers often overlook." ▸ According to a FootJoy study, 70 percent of golfers are wearing the wrong size shoe. One of those golfers turned out to be Justin Thomas. In testing FootJoy's Premiere Series, he noticed looseness and instability in his right heel. FootJoy examined his sizing and discovered his right foot is smaller than his left, so Thomas now plays in a size 8.5 in the right foot and a 9 in the left. He says a bad fit "can lead to foot fatigue, discomfort and loss of power because you're not using the ground effectively." ▸ When searching for a new pair, prioritize fit and then style. Try these eight on for size.



ADIDAS
ZG23 **$200**

The midsole's perimeter is firmer than the center to increase lateral support. Collin Morikawa asked Adidas to make this shoe so comfortable that he would forget he's wearing it and so clean-looking he wouldn't notice it at address.

NIKE AIR ZOOM VICTORY TOUR 3 **$180**

Pressurized air in a sturdy pocket enhances comfort, and the plate and foam underneath it provide structure and energy return. You'll be able to use the ground effectively and have a comfortable walk.

ASICS
GEL-PRESHOT **$120**

The flexible grooves in the outsole are angled so that your foot can move and rotate naturally through the swing. The outsole's perimeter has larger lugs to provide a stable base. The gel under the heel ensures a more comfortable walk.

SKECHERS
GO GOLF ELITE 5
SLIP-INS **$135**

You really shouldn't slide your shoes on or off without untying them, but Skechers knows you do it anyway, so this shoe has a heavily structured heel that allows you to easily slip in and out.

PUMA
IGNITE ELEVATE **$130**

The new outsole pattern offers double the points of traction than previous Ignite models. Each lug protrudes farther out and is less round than in past years, allowing the lugs to dig deeper into the turf during the swing.

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DIAL IN YOUR BALL-STRIKING

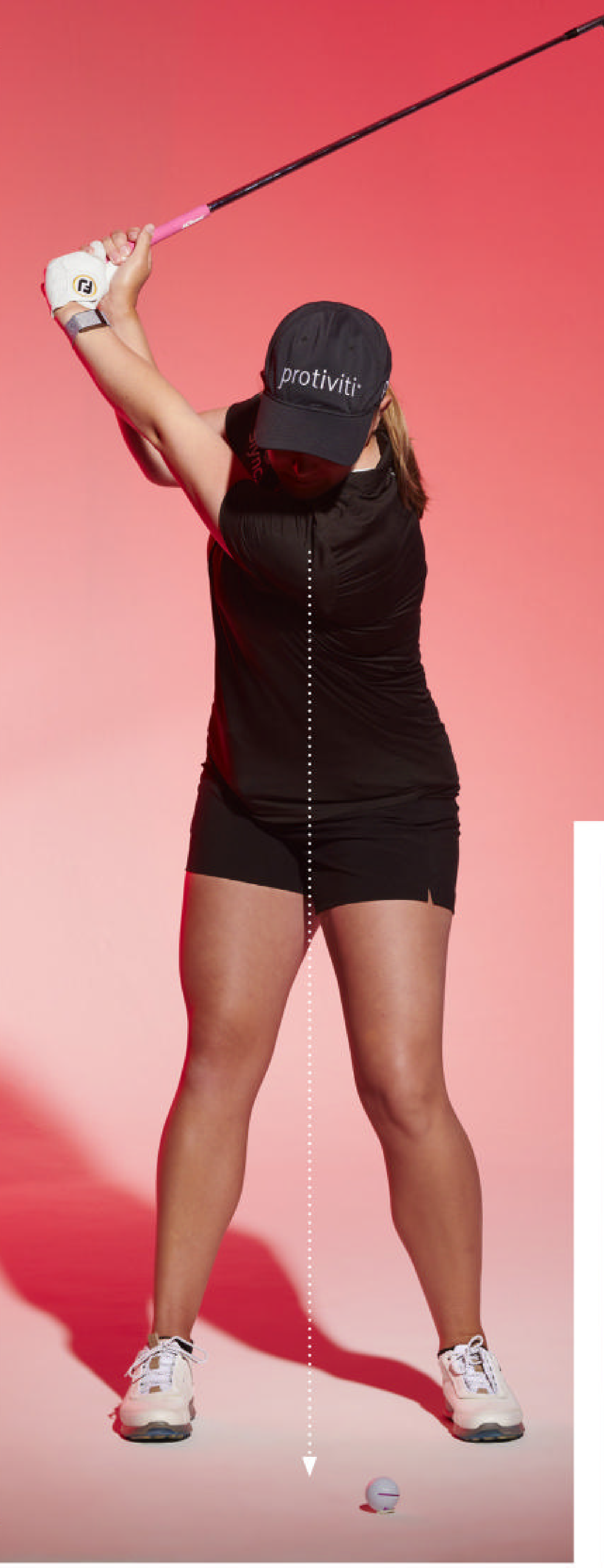
Try my two backswing keys for more consistent contact

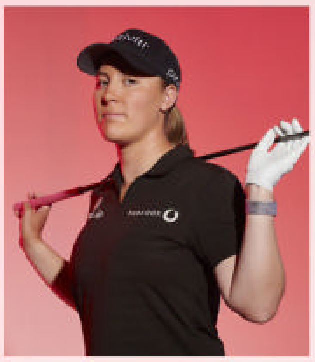
By Jennifer Kupcho

YOU KNOW HOW ATHLETES talk about being in the flow state? That's what happened to me during the third round of last year's Chevron Championship, when I made nine birdies and shot an eight-under-par 64—low round of the tournament by two shots. I hit 13 of 14 fairways and 15 of 18 greens in regulation. I was out of my mind and completely in my body. It was the same feeling I had when I won the inaugural Augusta National Women's Amateur in 2019. Though no athlete can teach you how to get into this flow state—I wish I knew how to control it myself—I can help you improve your ball-striking and hit more fairway and green finders. Here are two key moves my coach, Ed Oldham, and I work on to keep my contact consistent and my shot shape a predictable, easy-to-play cut. –WITH KEELY LEVINS

JENNIFER KUPCHO won her first three LPGA events in 2022, including her first major at the Chevron Championship.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MACKENZIE STROH



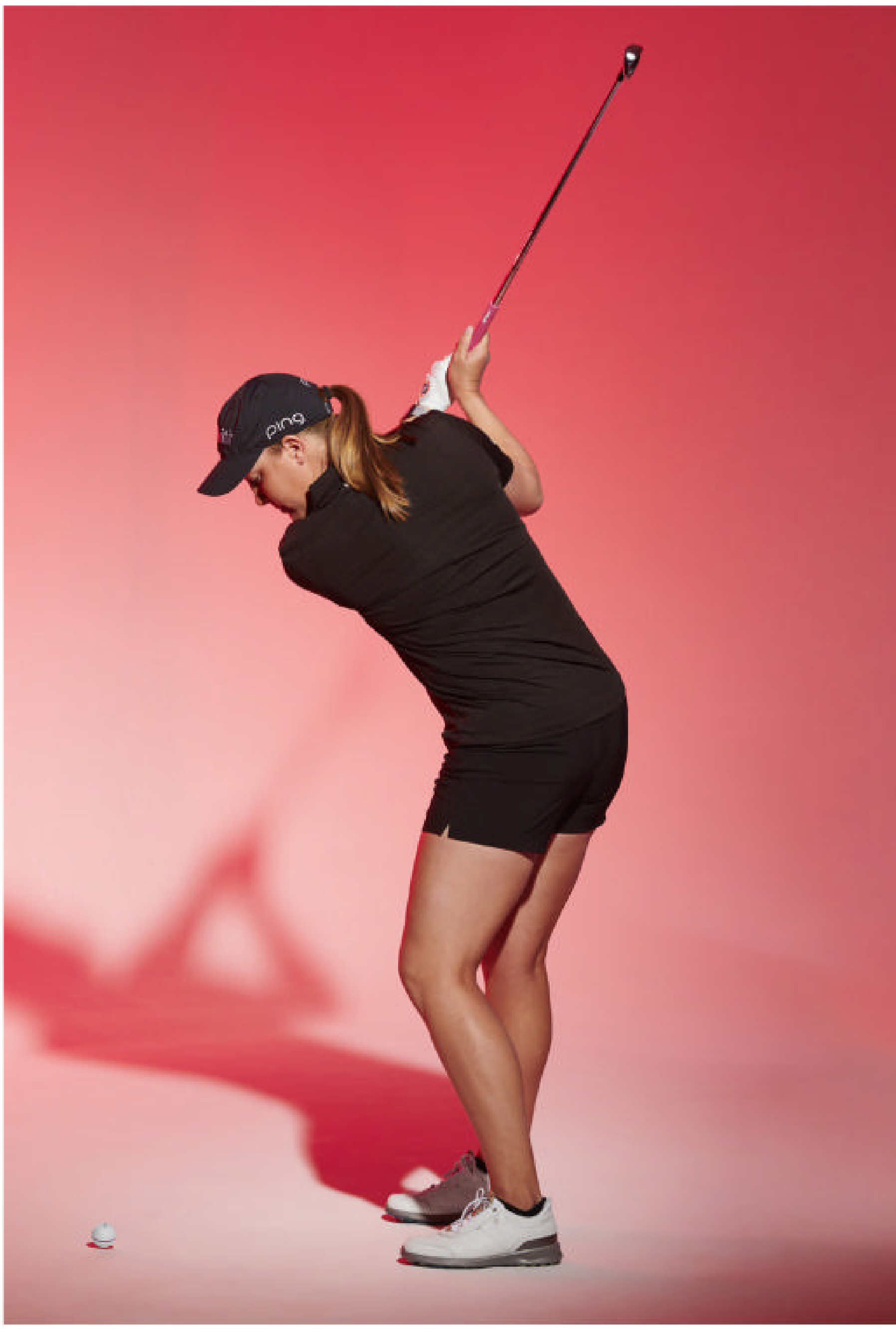


IT'S OK TO BE ANGRY

After a poor shot, a lot of amateurs don't know how to react. Some overreact and get really angry with themselves. Others show little to no emotion. I'm not afraid to react. I might even bang my club into the ground. The key is to get your frustration out without being too much of a distraction so that you have a clear mind for your next shot—and your frustration doesn't carry over into future shots. Bad shots are going to happen, and sometimes underreacting can be just as bad as overreacting.

TURN THE LEAD SHOULDER OVER THE BALL

I have something in common with a lot of amateurs: I'm pretty limited in how far I can rotate my shoulders. It helps me to have a checkpoint I know I have to reach to complete my backswing turn. The fuller the shoulder turn, the easier it is to route the club down from the inside and the less likely you are to come down over the top. For me, if I can rotate my lead shoulder far enough under my chin to where it's directly over the ball (*left*), I know I've made a deep turn. That's my checkpoint. If you draw a line straight down from the tip of your shoulder and it hits the ground left of where the ball is, you haven't turned enough.



ROTATE THE RIGHT HIP POCKET BACK

Rotation is just as important for the hips as it is for the shoulders. The biggest mistake I see amateurs make is that they sway their hips to the right going back instead of turning. One way to tell that you've turned your hips properly is to stop at the top of the backswing and look at the right back pocket on your shorts. If it's closer to the target than it was at address (*right*), you've rotated and not swayed your hips. Getting a full hip turn going back will help you transfer your weight forward on the downswing and keep you from bottoming the club out early with an open clubface.

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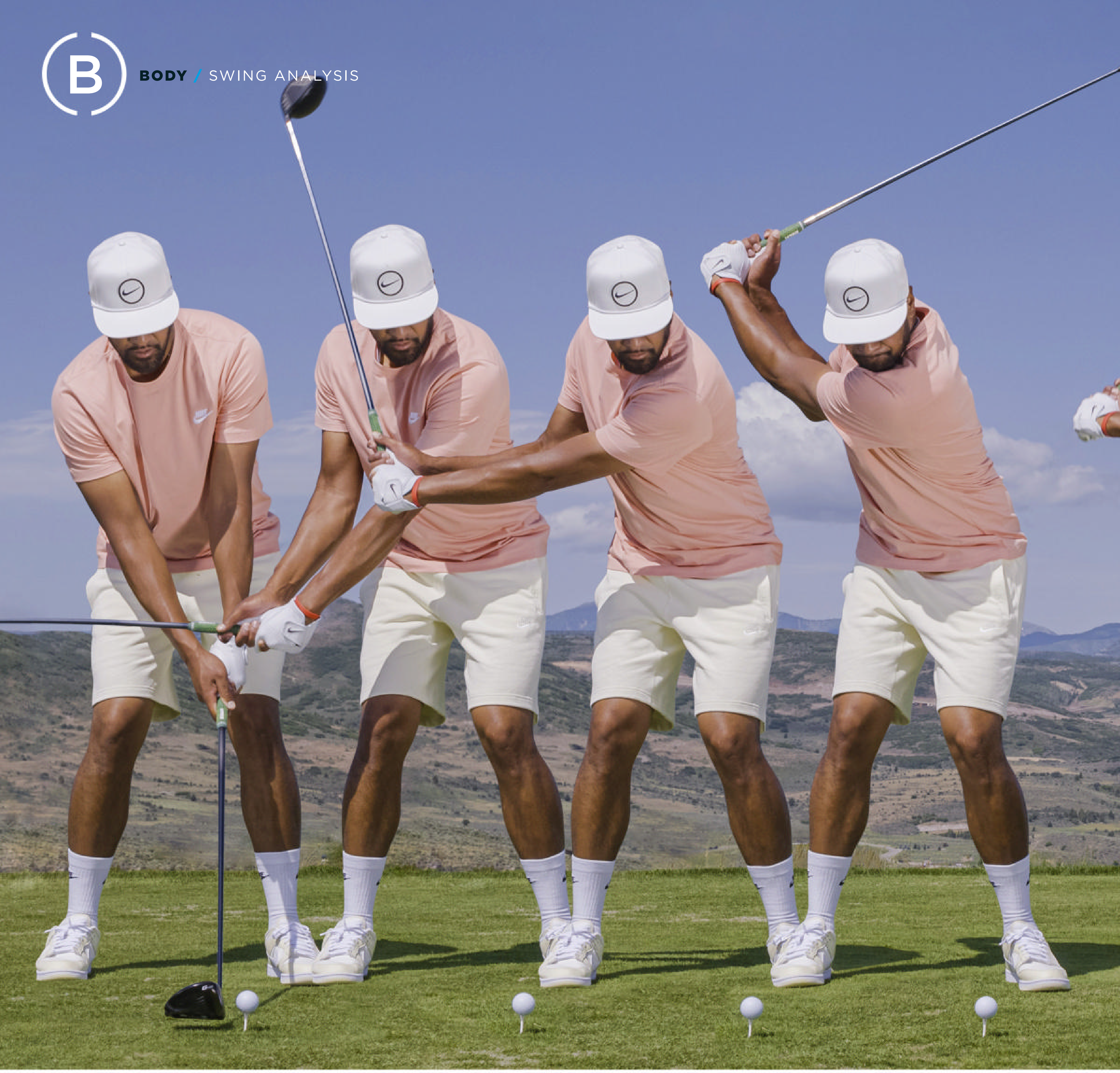


RATCHET UP YOUR TEMPO

Learn Tony Finau's shorter, faster move to better accuracy

By Dave Allen

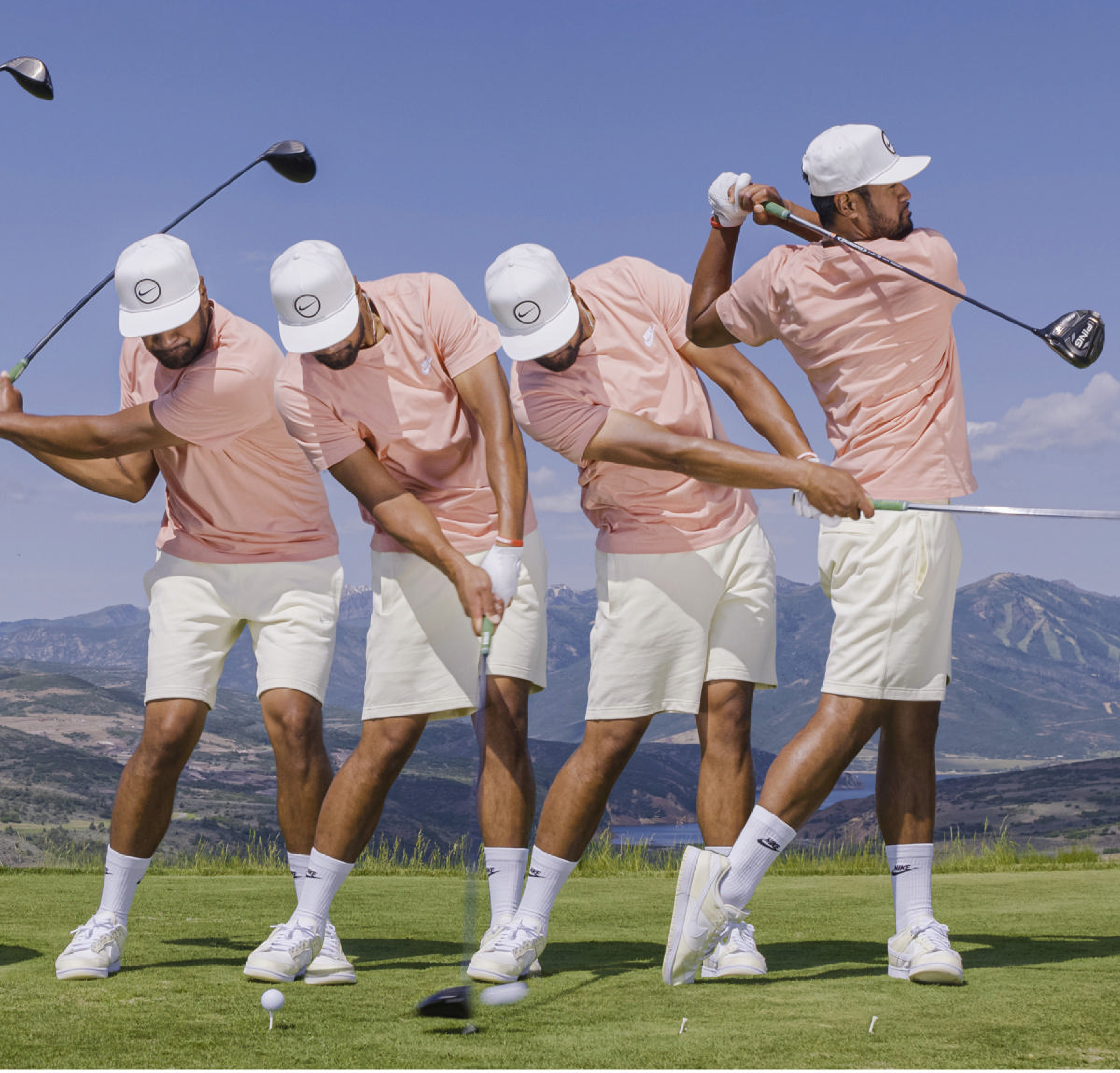
TONY FINAU HAS PLAYED SOME of his best golf on the biggest stages, leaving many to wonder just how the uber-talented 33-year-old had just two PGA Tour wins over his first seven-plus seasons on tour. They're left wondering no more. Finau now has five PGA Tour wins, including three since last July, the most of any player on tour during that stretch.

"I think the misconception that he's not a closer has been put to rest," says Boyd Summerhays, Finau's longtime swing coach.

Summerhays credits much of Finau's recent hot streak to his improved driving accuracy, which plays right into his greatest strength, his iron play. In his most recent win at the Cadence Bank Houston Open last November, Finau achieved a career first, hitting all 13 fairways in the third round.

"Now that he drives it so much better, he's getting to hit more iron shots from the fairway," says Summerhays, one of Golf Digest's 50 Best Teachers in America. "That kind of speaks to why he's doing so well. He's been driving it

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DOM FURORE



amazing and making the clutch putts on the weekend that you need to win."

Since his Korn Ferry Tour days, Finau has made some subtle adjustments to hit more fairways. At address, he positions his head farther behind the ball than most other pros. This allows him to shallow his angle of attack and hit more up on the ball without deviating much from his iron swing.

"It simplifies things for him," Summerhays says. "He doesn't have to move off the ball to the right. He can pretty much stay centered behind the ball."

As a 16-year-old, Finau possessed elite power and had no trouble generating ball speeds exceeding 200 miles per hour, Summerhays says. But with that power came a price in the form of missed fairways, so Finau gradually began shortening his backswing.

"He's the only person I've coached whose swing got shorter," Summerhays says. "I don't teach that—the game is about power and distance—but it helps him control it. Because he has a 6-foot-8 wingspan, he can be short and still generate lots of leverage and power."

The 6-foot-4 Finau's backswing tempo is among the fastest on tour, which is something most amateurs misconstrue as a bad thing.

"You'll hear a lot of amateurs say, 'Oh, I got quick,' " Summerhays says. "The truth is that many take it back too slow. As a result, they try to generate too much speed in the transition, which can feel a little jerky. Tony goes so fast on the backswing that it makes his transition less violent, and it feels smooth to him. He doesn't feel like he has to force the power in the transition."

WHAT'S IN MY BAG : LYDIA KO

AGE 25

LIVES
Orlando

STORY
Has won 19 LPGA Tour events, two of them majors.

KEEP AN OPEN MIND
As a free agent, testing clubs for the 2022 season, I was ready to try anything. Having an open mind led to some surprising changes: You may not have heard of Proto Concept, the Japanese irons I play, or my IOMIC grips, which I've used for a long time. Test without expectations; what's best for you could be something you would never consider.

—WITH KEELY LEVINS

CLUB	YARDS*
DRIVER	240
3-WOOD	221
5-WOOD	208
HYBRID	194
5-IRON	180
6-IRON	168
7-IRON	156
8-IRON	144
9-IRON	133
PW	124
50° WEDGE	112
54° WEDGE	99
58° WEDGE	88

* CARRY DISTANCE

DRIVER

SPECS Titleist TSR3, 9°, Mitsubishi Kurokage XD50 S shaft.

The most important piece of information for me when testing drivers is accuracy. I'm not one of the longest hitters on the LPGA Tour, and I don't feel pressure to change that. My goal is to increase my fairways-hit percentage [66.4 in 2022], and this driver is accurate.

FAIRWAY WOODS/HYBRID

SPECS Titleist TSR2+, 13°, Mitsubishi Kurokage XD60 S shaft; Titleist TSR2, 18.0 fairway, Mitsubishi Diamana PD60 S shaft; Ping G425, 22°, Graphite Design Tour AD IZ 65 R1 shaft.

I find hybrids easier to hit than long irons. In fact, I've never even carried a 4-iron.

IRONS

SPECS Titleist T200 (5-iron), Proto Concept CO7 (6-iron), Proto Concept CO5 (7-9); all Aerotech SteelFiber FC 70 shafts, IOMIC 1.8 grips.

Proto Concept irons are so consistent yet forgiving. I don't tend to launch the ball high, so I like that the higher ball flight with my Titleist T200 5-iron helps stop longer shots on the greens.

WEDGES

SPECS Titleist Vokey SM9 (46°, 48°, 54°, 59°); Aerotech SteelFiber FC 80 shafts.

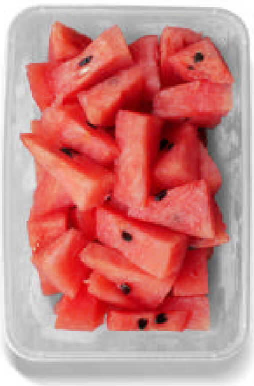
If you look at the stamp on my 58, you'll see a 59. It's bent to 59 degrees. I've tried both 58- and 60-degree wedges, but I found the 59 is best because of its versatility. It has enough loft to do what you need to around the greens but not so much loft that you can't hit pitch shots with it, too.

PUTTER

SPECS Scotty Cameron P5 GSS tour prototype; 34 inches, 3.5°.

This is my favorite club, and it helped me finish the year ranked No. 1 in strokes gained/putting. I used a few putters throughout the season, but I always lean toward a mallet. The center shaft fits my eye and helps my setup.

ALL-AROUND BALL When testing the Titleist Pro V1 and the Pro V1x, I found the V1x gave me the spin I wanted around the greens and provided the distance I needed in my long game.



SNACK PACK I like to snack on seasonal fruit with almond butter while I play. I always pack a big container of it. I also like to make sandwiches out of rice cakes and bananas.

LUGGAGE LOCATOR I've heard lots of horror stories about lost luggage this season. Some players used Apple AirTags to find their clubs. Luckily, I haven't had to use mine, but it's good to have just in case.

KO: DONALD MIRALLE/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JENSEN LARSON

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SIMPLIFY YOUR CHIPPING

Use your setup and follow-through to change trajectories

By Sean Hogan

BASED ON THE PRACTICE habits of many amateurs I teach, I'm going to guess that you don't have a ton of time to work on your short game. That's unfortunate, but let's not make it an excuse for poor chipping. You can play a number of different shots around the greens simply by making some adjustments to your setup and how you finish the swing. If you stay true to a few fundamentals, these simple alterations go a long way toward performing better around the greens, no matter the scenario. Turn the page to see how to produce three different chip shots and trajectories with some simple adaptations.

—WITH RON KASPRISKE

SEAN HOGAN, one of Golf Digest's Best Teachers in Florida, is at Golfzon Leadbetter Academy HQ in Kissimmee.

Check out Sean Hogan's new video series, now available in Golf Digest Schools. For hundreds of video lessons from top teachers and tour pros, visit schools.golfdigest.com.

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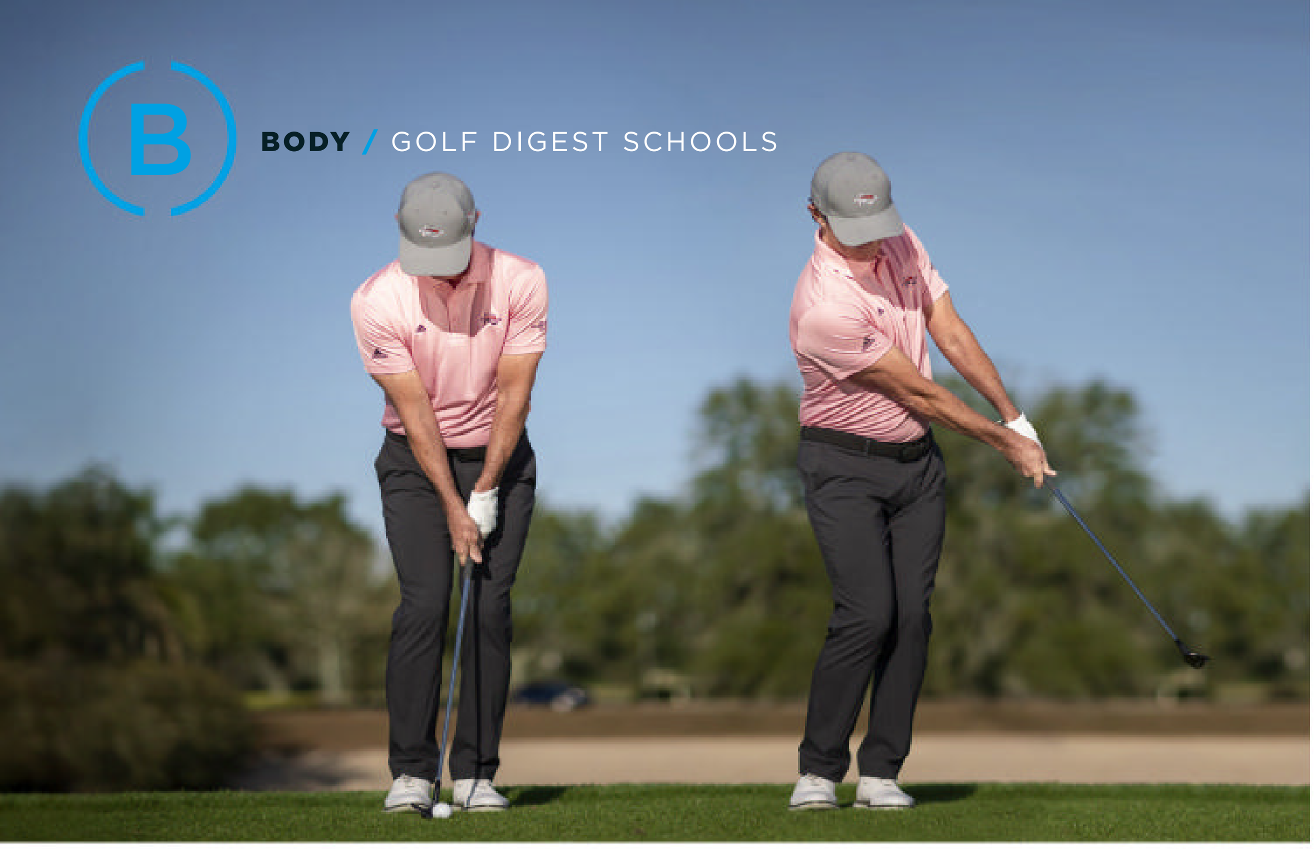
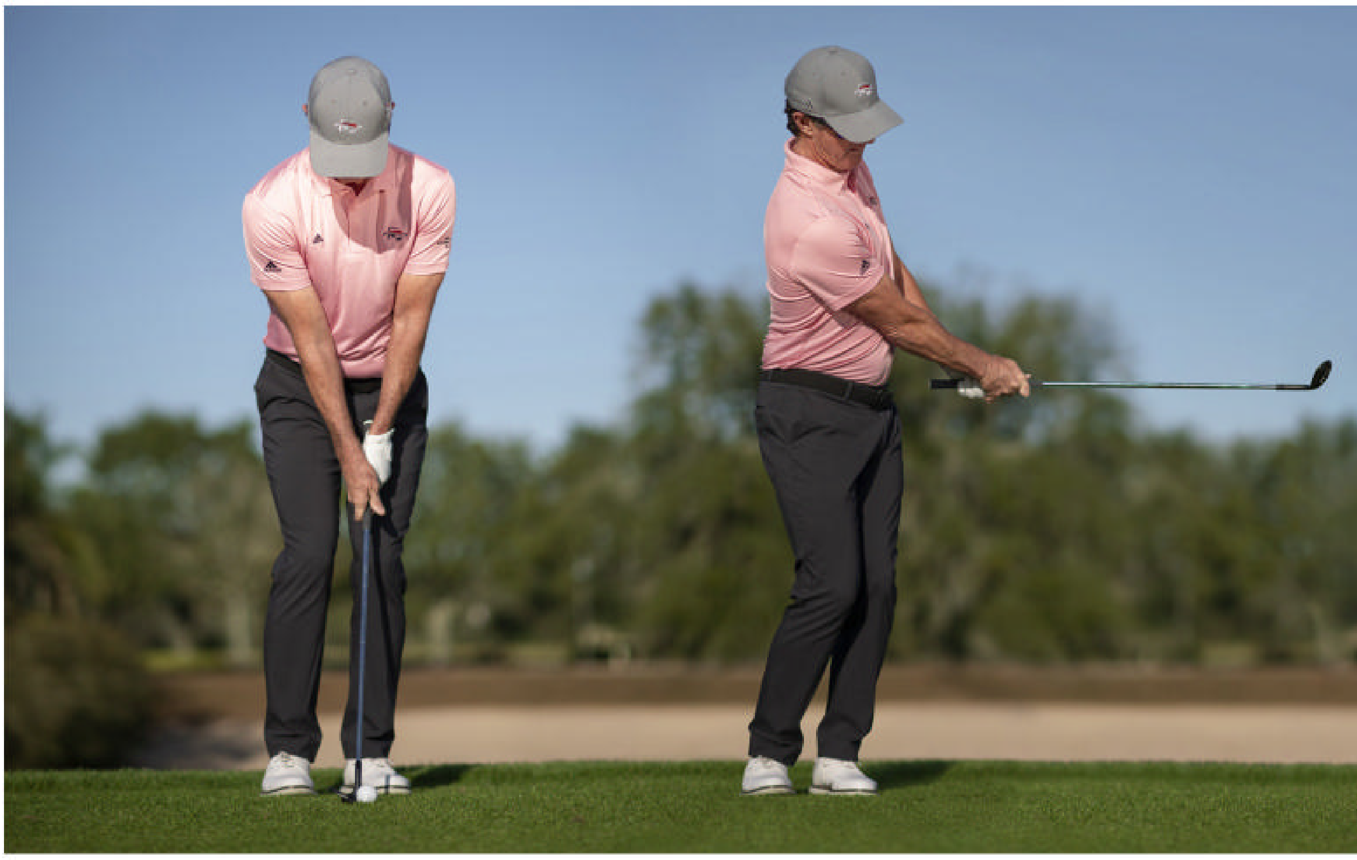


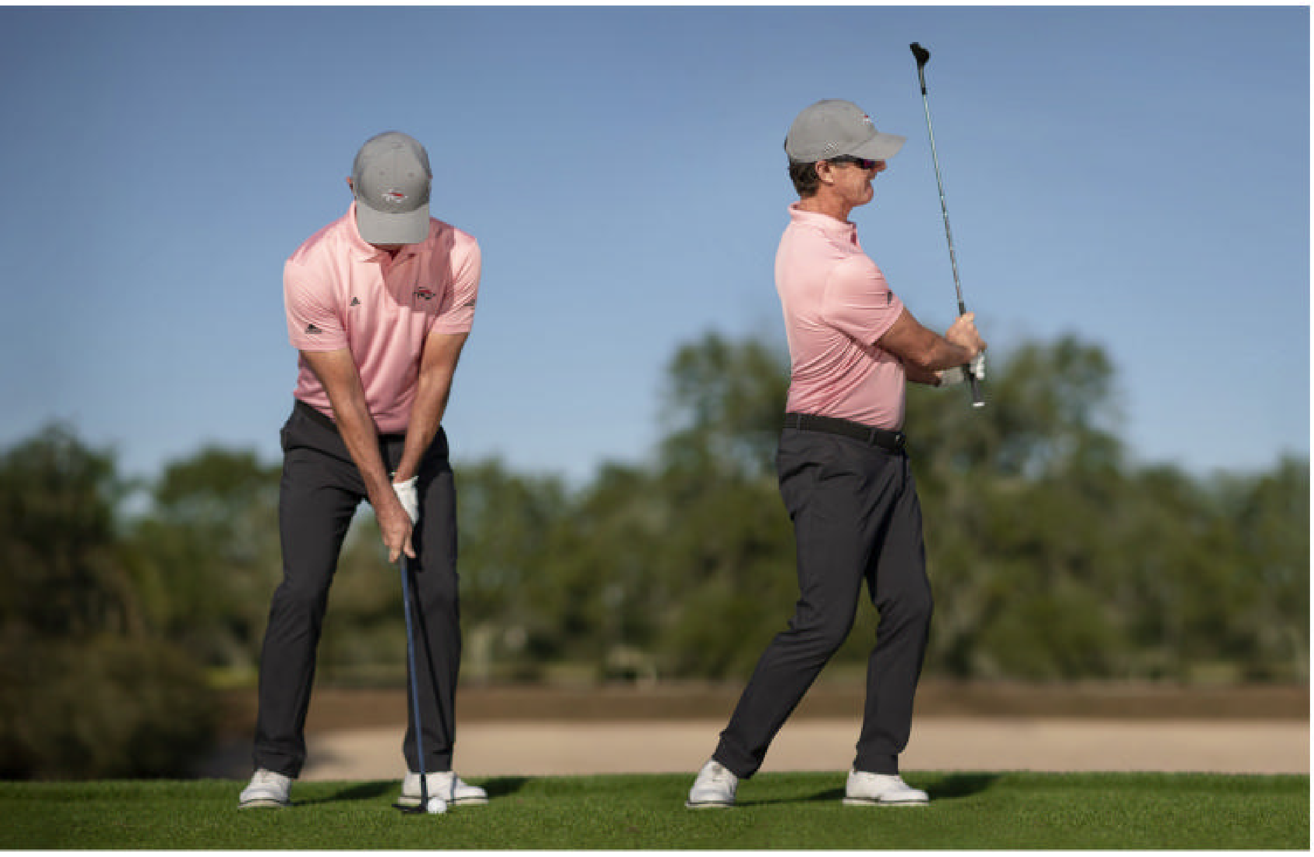
LOW CHIP
STAY NARROW AND COMPACT

Unless you have little green to work with or have to carry the ball over an obstacle, this low runner is your go-to chip. Set up in a narrow stance with your weight forward and the ball between your feet. Also, make sure the buttons on your shirt are aligned slightly ahead of the ball (*far left*). Keeping your weight on your lead foot, make a compact backswing and let your body rotation in the through-swing propel the club into the ball and beyond it. Finish in this abbreviated position (*near left*).

MEDIUM CHIP
GET A LITTLE WIDER AND LONGER

The setup and swing for a medium-trajectory chip is going to look and feel a lot like the low runner, but there are some subtle differences. At address, play the ball a little farther forward and stand a touch wider to add loft to the shot (*near right*). The backswing will feel a little longer, and the through-swing will be more pronounced as a result of swinging a little more aggressively. Your body rotation will still be the engine that moves the club. Resist the urge to stop your swing just after impact. Keep turning until the shaft of your wedge is roughly parallel to the ground like you see here (*far right*).





HIGH CHIP
SET UP BEHIND IT AND RELEASE

Save this high-lofted chip for those rare instances when you have very little green to work with because it's the toughest to execute. Set up much wider, with the ball off your front foot and your head and shirt buttons behind the ball (*far left*). Your weight should still favor your front foot. The length of the through-swing is key to the height of this shot. You'll need to make a full body rotation as I am here, and let the clubhead release through the ball, passing the hands. Soft wrists help make that happen. Finish with the shaft skyward (*near left*), and you'll produce a shot even a tour pro would admire.

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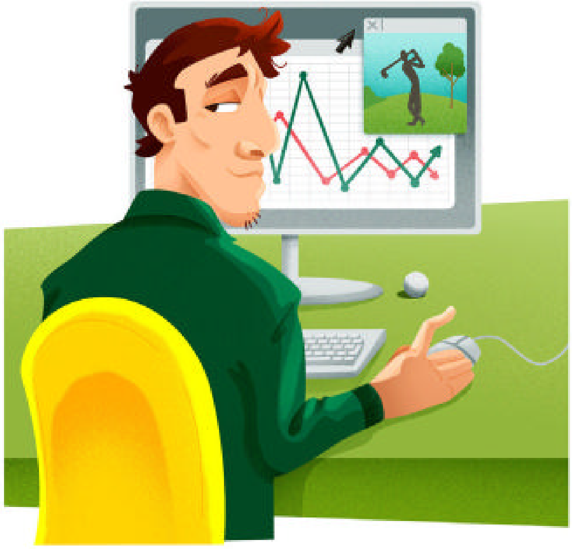
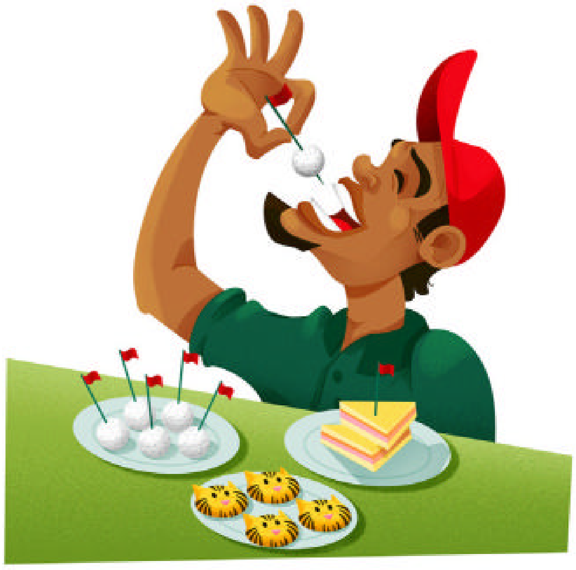
What Kind of Masters Viewer Are You?

How you watch says a lot about who you are

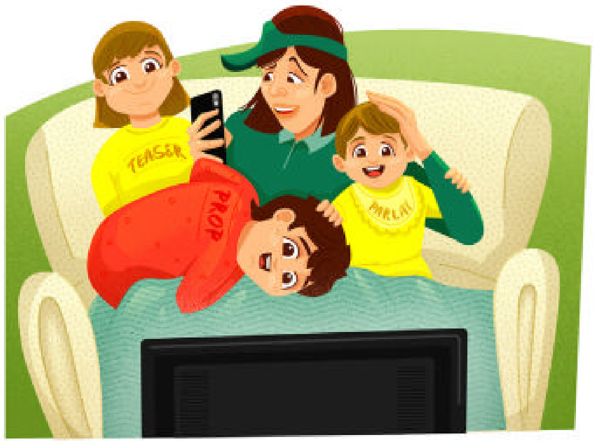
By Coleman Bentley



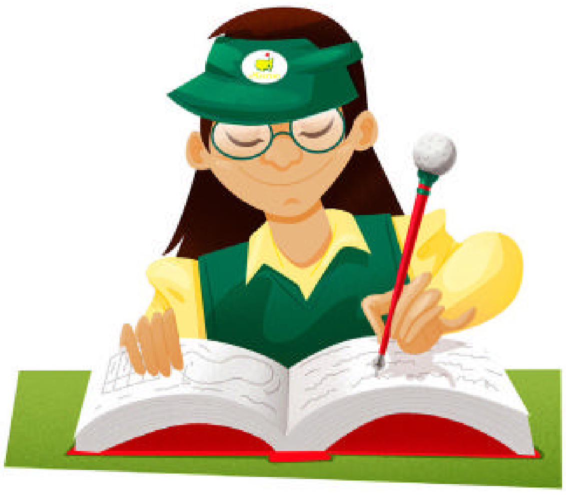
THE SECOND-SCREENER
You have your trigger finger on the minimize button. You're climbing the corporate ladder while Rory climbs the leader board.



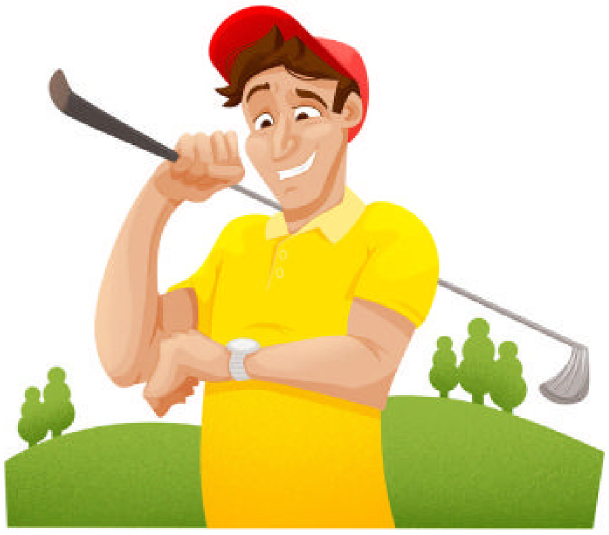
THE GRAZER
You're here for your annual golf snack. You know Tiger wears red and the jacket is green. You spell "Jon Rahm" with two Hs.



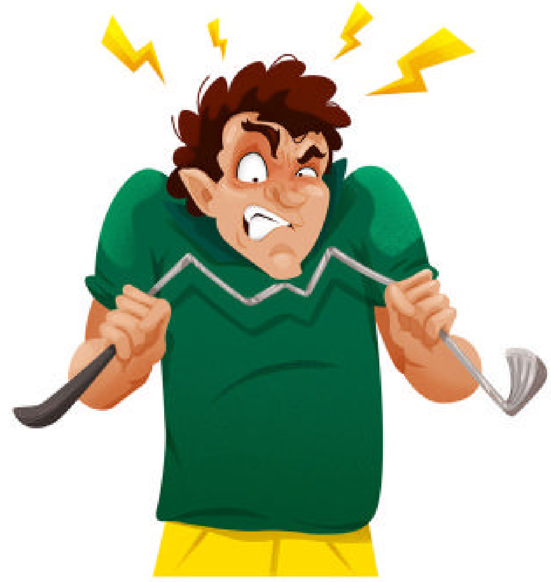
THE GAMBLER
You gave up tickets to stay home with your kids: Parlay, Prop and Teaser.



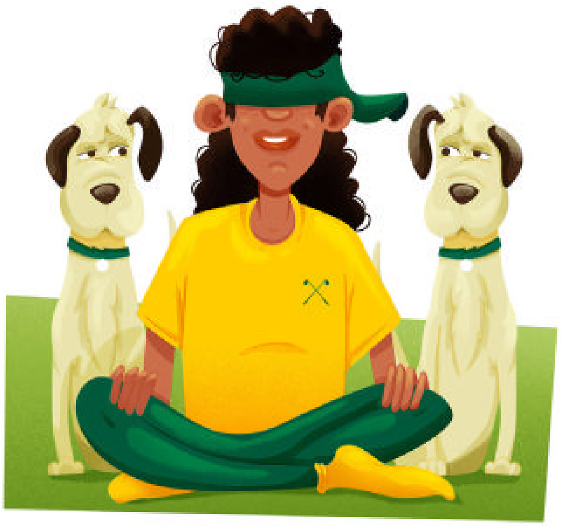
THE ENCYCLOPEDIA
Your pen and paper updates faster than an app, and you know what color socks Nicklaus was wearing in '86.



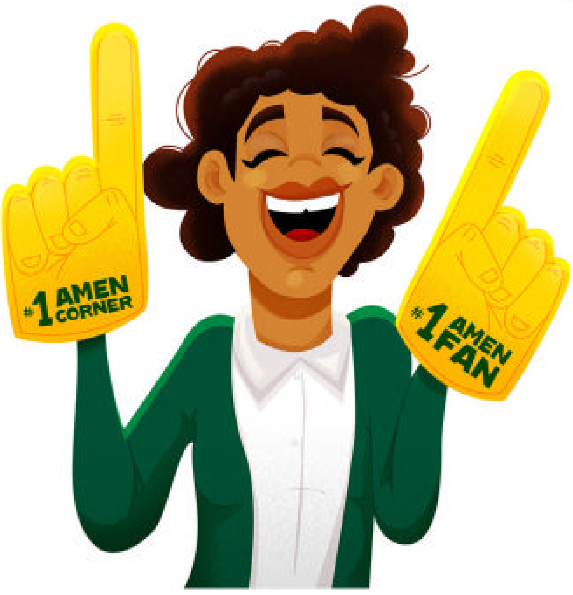
THE PLAYER
Inspiration knocks. The birds chirp a siren song. Your round should be over by the time the leaders go off anyway.



THE HATER
The course is too long. The greens are too firm. Azaleas give you hives, and you're rooting on every four-putt like The Big One at Talladega.



THE TRUE BELIEVER
Your dogs' names are Alister and MacKenzie. You could make a pimento-cheese sandwich blindfolded in a hurricane.



AMEN CORNER SPECIALIST
You haven't seen an opening tee shot all week. You can't even spell "featured group." You have your niche, and you're sticking to it.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAVIDE BARCO

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